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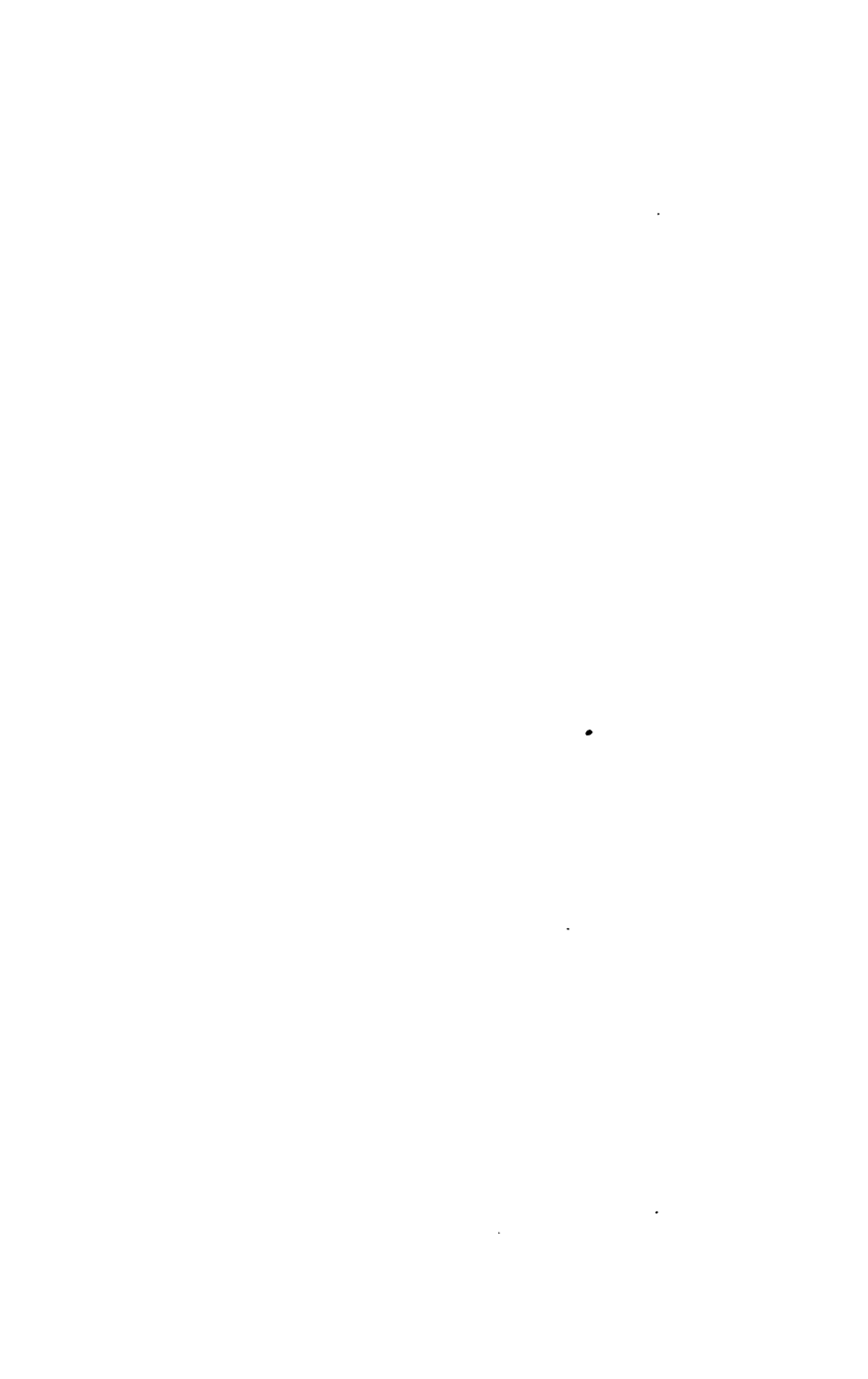
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THE GIFTS OF THE KINGDOM.

THE GIFTS
OF
THE KINGDOM.

BEING
LECTURES
DELIVERED DURING LENT, 1855,
AT ST. GEORGE'S, BLOOMSBURY.

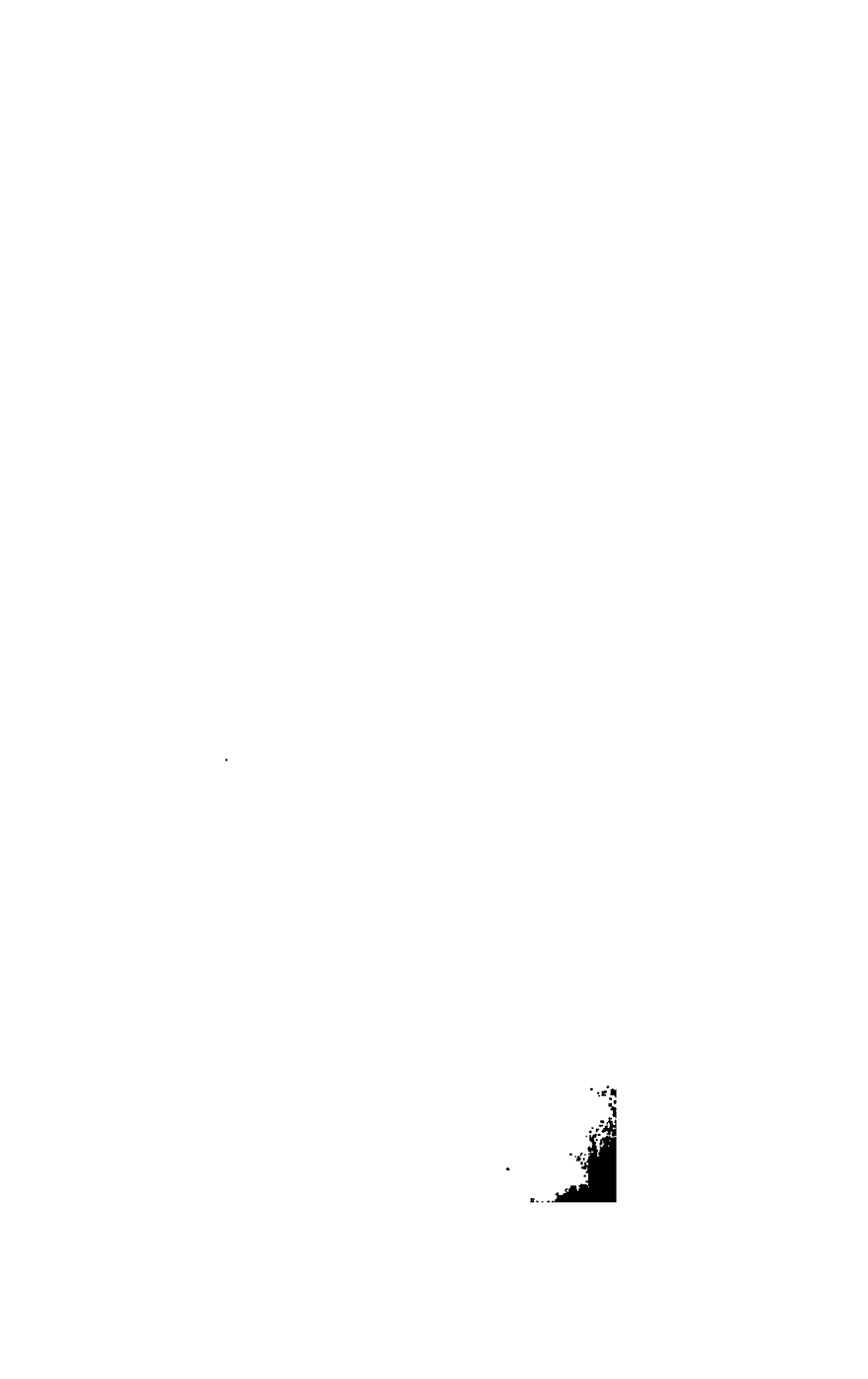
By Twelve Clergymen of the Church of England.

WITH A PREFACE,
BY THE REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, M.A.,
CANON RESIDENTIARY OF SALISBURY, AND RECTOR OF ST. GILES'
IN THE FIELDS.

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Preface.

THE following Lectures form the fourteenth annual series of prophetical sermons delivered in St. George's, Bloomsbury, during the season of Lent in the present year (1855). A general unity of design pervades the entire course, but each sermon contains the independent views of the preacher by whom it was delivered. In so far therefore as similar views of prophecy are maintained in the several discourses, this may be regarded as an evidence to the degree of unanimity at which the students of prophecy have arrived in the interpretation of the prophetical portions of the Sacred Scriptures.

For several years past, increasing attention has been given by Christians in general to the study

of prophecy ; there has been a considerable abatement of the prejudice with which this study was formerly regarded, and a growing disposition to search for the mind of the Spirit in those passages of the Word of God which relate to coming events.

There are confessedly many points of detail upon which different opinions are maintained, but as time advances, and as more attention is awakened to the study, it may be hoped that the points of disagreement will gradually melt into that circumference of truth in reference to which there is uniformity of opinion.

At the same time it is becoming more and more apparent, that the investigation of prophecy, provided it be conducted in a spirit of prayerful dependence on divine teaching, is eminently practical : this study is peculiarly fitted to enlarge our conceptions of the character and the ways of God ; to unfold fuller and richer discoveries of His infinite wisdom, eternal truth, and unfailing love. It has a direct tendency to weaken the ascendancy which the things of time and

sense are so apt to acquire ; it is well adapted to elevate above the ensnaring influence of this present evil world by the hope, to which it ever points, of the glories and the triumphs of the approaching kingdom of Messiah.

The circumstances of the times give a more than wonted interest to the examination of the prophetical portions of Scripture. Even the most careless and superficial observer can scarcely fail to notice in the passing events of the present crisis the indications of some near approaching consummation. The signs to which our blessed Lord pointed, as tokens of the end, are being presented year by year with greater frequency and distinctness. Moreover, it is one peculiar feature of the present period, that these signs are exhibited in every variety, and yet *cotemporaneously*. Thus, we find war, famine, pestilence, earthquake, each of these predicted signs exhibited almost at one and the same time, on one and the same scene, as though to compel attention to the warning note of prophecy, "*Behold, I come quickly.*"

The sermons contained in this volume are of a practical character. The general design of them is to quicken the hope of the believer, and stimulate to a more earnest preparation for the coming of the Lord. Having been heard with singular attention at the time of their delivery, it is believed that they will be perused with interest. May the Spirit of God abundantly rest upon the Reader, that the truths which are set forth in the following pages may contribute to the glory of Christ and the edification of His Church.

ROBERT BICKERSTETH.

Gower Street, April 21, 1855.

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BY THE

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LECTURE I.

THE REVELATION AND ITS BLESSING.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,

RECTOR OF HELMINGHAM, SUFFOLK.

REVELATIONS I. 1—3.

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

WE are gathered together this night, as a Christian congregation, in “troublous” and “perilous” times. Never perhaps since this course of lectures

first commenced, was there so much in the aspect of public affairs to raise grave and anxious thoughts in thinking minds.

We are always apt to exaggerate the importance of events that happen in our own days. I do not forget that. But I cannot retract what I have just said. I look around me at the things now going on in the world. I look forward to the possible future. And as I look I feel that I am justified in speaking of our times as "perilous" and "troublous." I appeal to the judgment of all who observe the history of their own day, "Is there not cause?"

There are three heavy judgments which God can send upon a nation—the sword, the pestilence, and the famine. Of these three one has fallen heavily upon our country within the last six months, and one is pressing heavily upon us at this very moment. We have been drawn into a war with one of the mightiest empires in the world—a war of which none can conjecture the final issues, or divine whereunto it may grow—a war, be it remembered, which began about the holy places at Jerusalem—a war, be it remembered, which is closely bound up with the mysterious wasting away of the Mahometan power—a war, be it remembered, in which extraordinary efforts are being made to induce all the ten kingdoms of the fourth empire to take a

part. Surely these signs of the times deserve no common notice. They should make us say with Habakkuk "I will stand upon my watch and set me upon my tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me" (Hab. ii. 1). They should make us cry with Daniel, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (Dan. xii. 8).

But one thing at all events is clear, and that is the duty incumbent on Christians to search more diligently than ever the prophetic scriptures. Let us not be like the Jews at the first advent, blind to the hand of God and the fulfilment of His purposes in all that is going on in the world. Let us rather remember that the word of prophecy is given to be "a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise" (2 Pet. i. 19). Let us walk much in that light. Let us search "what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the prophets did signify, when He testified before the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11). Let us compare prophecies fulfilled with prophecies unfulfilled, and endeavour to make the one illustrate the other. Let us strive above all to obtain clear views of the things yet to be expected, both in the church and the world, before the end comes and time shall be no more.

With such feelings I now invite you to enter on the consideration of the subjects to be brought

before you in the course of lectures begun this night. That course, I need hardly remind you, is entirely taken out of the three first chapters of the Book of Revelation. May the blessing which is specially promised to the readers and hearers of this Book be with us all !

In considering the verses you have heard read to-night, there are three points to which I desire to call your attention :—

I. The general character of the Book of Revelation.

II. The arguments commonly used to deter men from reading it.

III. The many useful lessons which the study of it is calculated to teach.

1. The general character of the Book of Revelation.

The Book of Revelation differs widely from any other book of the Old or New Testaments. In many respects it is unlike the rest of the Bible. There is a solemn and majestic peculiarity about it. It stands alone.

It is peculiar in *the dignity with which it begins*. The very first verse prepares the reader for something extraordinary—for a book even more directly from God, if possible, than one written under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is called “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God

gave unto Him, to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass, and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John."

It is peculiar in *the subject matter which it contains*. It contains less of doctrinal and practical Christianity, in proportion to its length, than any book of the New Testament. With few exceptions its pages are filled with prophecies—prophecies of the widest range, extending, it seems to me, from the time of John, to the very end of the world—prophecies embracing a vast number of events, spreading over the whole "times of the Gentiles" and covering the mighty interval between the destruction of the first Jerusalem and the descent of the new Jerusalem from heaven—prophecies of most universal importance, having reference not only to the condition and prospects of the believing Church but also of the unconverted world.

It is peculiar in *the style and dress in which its subject matter is clothed*. With the exception of the 2nd and 3rd chapters, the greater part of the book is composed of visions which the apostle John saw in the spirit. In these visions the vast range of the church's history was revealed to him under emblems, figures, allegories, symbols and similitudes. Of the great majority of these symbols and emblems the meaning is not revealed. The general characteristics of these visions are much alike.

All are marked by a vastness, a grandeur, a majesty, a life, a force, a boldness, a sublimity, entirely unparalleled in any human writings. The door opened in heaven—the voice like a trumpet speaking—the sea of glass like crystal—the seven seals—the seven trumpets—the seven vials—the four angels holding the four winds—the mighty angel with a face like the sun, his right foot on the sea, his left on the earth—the woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet—the great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns—the beast that rose out of the sea—the mighty earthquake—the destruction of Babylon—the summoning of the fowls of heaven to the supper of the great God—the binding of Satan—the great white throne—the last judgment—the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven—the description of the glorious city—who can read such things without being struck by them? who can study them and avoid the conclusion—“this is written with the finger of God?”

Such is the general character of the Book of Revelation. Such is the book which you are emphatically told, it is blessed to read. I will only offer two general remarks on the symbolical style in which the book is composed and then pass on.

One remark is, that you must not regard the use of symbolical language as entirely peculiar to

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the Book of Revelation. You will find it in other parts of Scripture. The very emblems and figures of the Apocalypse whose meaning seems so obscure, are often employed by the Holy Ghost in the Old Testament. You read for example of four living creatures in the fourth chapter. You read of four also in Ezekiel (i. 5). You read of horses in the vision of the four first seals. You read of horses also in the vision of Zechariah (vi. 2, 3). You read of a sealed company in the seventh chapter. You read also of a sealed and marked people in the vision of Ezekiel (chap. ix.). You read of a plague of locusts under the fifth trumpet. You read of locusts also in the prophecy of Joel (chap. ii.). You read of John eating the little book in the tenth chapter. You read also of Ezekiel eating the roll in his vision (chap. iii.). You read of olive trees and candlesticks in the vision of the two witnesses. You read of the same emblems in the prophecy of Zechariah (chap. iv.). You read of a beast having seven heads and ten horns in the thirteenth chapter. You read of a similar beast in the Book of Daniel (chap. vii.). You read of a wondrous celestial city in the twenty-first chapter. You have the description of a city scarcely less mysterious, though different, at the end of Ezekiel (chap. xl., &c.). These things are worthy of remark. They shew us that we must not be stum-

bled by the symbols of Revelation, as if they were altogether a new and strange thing. We must remember they are used in the Old Testament, as well as here, though far more sparingly, in communicating the mind of God to man. The peculiarity of the Apocalypse is not so much the use of symbols and emblems, as the profuse abundance of them.

My other remark is, that a symbolical style of composition will always seem more strange to us than it does to Oriental nations. Figures, parables, illustrations and similitudes, are infinitely better known in the countries round the Holy Land than they are among ourselves. The hieroglyphic inscriptions for example, which abound in Egypt and elsewhere in the East, are nothing more than symbolical writings. Who does not know that at first sight these hieroglyphics seem uncouth, meaningless, dark and obscure? The first step the student of them must take is to become familiar with their appearance. By and bye he may hope to become acquainted with the key to their meaning. Ultimately, that key being found, these very hieroglyphics are found full of interesting matter. It is much the same with the Book of Revelation. It is a book of sacred hieroglyphics. Its very style is one to which our matter of fact northern mind is utterly unaccustomed. To us

therefore, its visions seem doubly strange—strange because we are not familiar with such a mode of conveying our ideas—stranger still, because in many cases we have no clue to their meaning. Our first step must be to read them and study them much, so as to become familiarised with their outward garb, with the style of composition in which they are clothed. So studying in a prayerful spirit, we may hope that the meaning of their inward contents will be gradually made more plain to our minds.

One thing let us always remember in reading the visions of the Apocalypse. Whether we understand little or much, let us settle it in our minds as a fixed principle that every vision in the book has a real definite meaning.

The time is short. We hasten on towards a day when every page shall be unfolded and unsealed. Every knot shall be untied. Every hard question shall be solved. Then shall we see that the Revelation like every other part of the inspired volume, was all “very good.”

Then shall we find that the blessing pronounced on its students was not given in vain and that those readers whom God blesses are blessed indeed.

II. Let us consider in the next place the arguments commonly used to deter men from studying the Book of Revelation.

There never have been wanting good men who have deprecated the study of Revelation as unprofitable. They have spoken of it as a book too dark and mysterious for use. They have bid men respect it as inspired, but not touch it—reverence it at a distance, as part of the canon, but not draw near to it or handle its contents. To this prejudice we probably owe the unhappy omission of the book from the daily calendar of lessons in the Liturgy of the Church of England. It is deeply to be regretted that in the last arrangement of that calendar the Apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon should have been thrust in, and the Revelation of John the Divine should have been shut out. Room was made for an entirely uninspired composition. No place was found for a book to the reading of which a special blessing is promised. Truly we may say in this case, "Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment" (Job xxxii. 9).

When such prejudices have existed against the study of the Book of Revelation among good men, we cannot wonder that the children of the world should have gone further. Men, more witty than wise, have launched sharp sayings, jests and jibes at its students. They have not been ashamed to find a mark for witticism in its solemn and mysterious visions. Even a man like Scaliger declared that

one of Calvin's wisest acts was his abstaining from writing a commentary on the book. Even our own great moralist Dr. Johnson, is reported to have said, "that the study of Revelation either found a man mad or left him so."

But, after all, what is the real worth of the objections commonly made to the study of Revelation? Let us weigh them in the balance and see to what they amount. To my own mind they appear neither so serious nor so unanswerable as is commonly supposed.

One class of objectors dislikes the book, because it seems to point to a coming state of things in the world, which, to their minds, is monstrous, incredible, and improbable.

That God should send plagues and judgments upon the nations of the earth, because of their sins against Him,—that the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the captains, and the rich, and the mighty, and the bond, and the free, should really flee to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb,—that the kingdoms of this world should really become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ,—that the saints of the Lord Jesus should ever reign upon the earth, and everthing that defileth be cast out,—all this is to their minds almost absurd. It is contrary to their common

sense, they tell us. It is a mark of a weak mind to believe it. It is extravagance. It is raving. It is enthusiasm. It is going back to the ranting of fifth monarchy-men in the Commonwealth. It cannot be. We cannot shew them the details of the mode in which all these things shall come to pass. They will not believe them. A book from which we draw such strange fanatical opinions can never be a profitable one to study.

I am not careful as to the answer to be given to such objectors. They would do well to remember that the great leading events yet to come, to which Revelation points, are in no wise more wonderful than many which have already taken place in the world. The destruction of the old world by the flood,—the wasting of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, and Egypt,—the scattering of the Jews, and their perpetual preservation notwithstanding as a separate people,—all these were things utterly improbable at the time when they were foretold. But we know that they all came to pass. And as it has been in days gone by, so it shall be in days to come. Men, in their pride of heart, forget that in the eyes of an Eternal God the movements of the nations of the earth are but as the struggles of a few ephemeral insects. Yet a little time, and despotic and constitutional governments, liberal

and conservative parties, all, all shall be swept away. God has said it, and with Him nothing is impossible:

As to the manner in which the great events predicted in Revelation shall be brought about, we do not pretend to explain it. There are many things which we accept as facts and yet should find it impossible to explain. We believe the creation of all things out of nothing. We believe the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. We believe the fact of the Incarnation. But who would dare to offer an explanation of any of these great mysteries? We have a right to regard unfulfilled prophecy in the same light. We claim belief for its facts, though the mode of their accomplishment be at present hid from our eyes.

I leave this first class of objectors here. I fear the secret spring of their arguments in too many cases is the dislike of the natural heart to spiritual things. The heart not taught by the Holy Ghost rebels against the idea of severe judgments against sin,—a kingdom of Christ,—a reign of the saints; and the plain truth is, that it is not so much the book of Revelation that such a heart really objects to, as the whole Gospel of Christ, and all the counsel of God.

Another class of objectors must next be noticed. These are those who deprecate the study of Reve-

lation because of the wide differences which prevail in the interpretation of its contents, and the notorious mistakes into which interpreters have fallen.

I do not for a moment pretend to deny the existence of these differences and mistakes. Some good men tell us confidently that the whole book is entirely unfulfilled. They look for an accomplishment of its visions so clear and unmistakeable that there shall be no room left for doubt. Other good men assure us with no less confidence that the whole book is fulfilled, with the exception of a small portion at the end. A third school of expositors maintains that the Revelation is partly fulfilled, and partly unfulfilled. As to the details of the book, the meaning and application of the several visions it contains, the fulfilment of times and seasons, time would fail if I were to recount the various interpretations that have been put forth, and the errors that have been committed.

Now, what shall we say to these things? What can the advocate for Apocalyptic study reply to these undeniable facts?

My reply is, that the variations and mistakes in the views of interpreters constitute no argument against the study of the book itself. Because others have missed the road in searching for truth, you and I are not to give up the search altogether, and sit down in contented ignorance. Who has

not heard of the extravagant and contradictory theories which astronomers, geologists, and physicians have occasionally propounded in their respective sciences? Yet who would think of giving up astronomy, geology, or medicine, in despair, because of the conflicting tenets and avowed mistakes of their professors? Luther and Zwingli differed widely about the Lord's Supper. Cranmer and Hooper differed widely about vestments. Wesley and Toplady differed widely on predestination. Yet no one in his senses would think of giving up the study of the Christian system, because these good men could not agree.

My answer furthermore is, that the very mistakes and differences of Apocalyptic interpreters are not without their use. They have cleared the field in many a direction, and shewn us what the Revelation does *not* mean. Expositors have shewn in many cases the weakness of other men's interpretations, if they have not succeeded in establishing their own. To know what an unfulfilled Scriptural prediction does *not* mean, is one step towards knowing what it does. When Napoleon was overtaken by the rising tide, in a dark evening, on the sandy shore of the Red Sea, he is said to have ordered his attendants to disperse, and ride in different directions,—charging each one to report as he proceeded whether the water grew shallower or

deeper. There was great wisdom in that order. Each man's report was useful. The report of him who found the water deepening was in its way as useful as the report of the successful finder of the right path. It is much the same with the widely varying expositions of Revelation. It is evident that many of them must be wrong. But all in their way have done good. There is hardly one, perhaps, which has not contributed some sparks of light.

My answer beside this is, that the differences of Apocalyptic interpreters, great as they undoubtedly are, are often magnified and absurdly exaggerated. The common points of agreement among expositors are more in number, and greater in importance, than men commonly suppose. Whether the seals, trumpets, and vials, are fulfilled or not, all students of the Revelation agree that there are judgments predicted in it on the unconverted and unbelieving. Whether days mean literal days, as some say, or years, as others say, all are agreed that the time of the wicked triumphing is defined, limited, and fixed by the counsels of God. Whether the beast with horns like a lamb be the Papal power or not, nearly all are agreed that Romish Apostacy is foretold in the book, and doomed. Whether Christ shall come and reign *visibly* on earth or not for 1000 or 365,000 years, all are agreed that the kingdoms of

- this world shall sooner or later become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ, and that all believers should look and long for their Lord's return. I doubt much whether this is as much considered by the opponents of Apocalyptic study as it deserves.

I grant them freely that the divergences and contrarieties of the paths drawn out by the expositors of the book are very many, and very great. But, bid them remember that the great terminus toward which all their lines lead is almost always one and the same. Oh ! that men would remember that mighty terminus, and realize the tremendous importance of the end and breaking up of all things towards which they hasten. Then would they be more anxious to study any book which handles matters like those contained in Revelation. Then would they be less ready to catch at any excuse for declining Apocalyptic study.

The only remaining objection to the study of Revelation which I shall notice, is that which is drawn from the mysterious character of a large portion of the book.

That the Revelation is full of dark and difficult things it is of course impossible to deny. Some of its symbols and emblems the Spirit of God has thought good to interpret and explain. The seven stars,—the seven candlesticks,—the incense,—the

fine linen,—the waters on which the woman sat,—the woman herself,—all these, and a few more, are expounded, perhaps as a specimen of the kind of meaning which should be attached to the symbols of the book generally. But, after every deduction, there remain a very large number of visions and emblems which the Spirit has not thought fit to interpret. These symbols are unquestionably dark and mysterious. It is not, perhaps, saying too much, to admit that after all the attempts of commentators, ancient and modern,—preterist and futurist,—there are many visions and symbols of Revelation which, we must confess, we do not understand. I do not say that elaborate and learned expositions of them have not been offered, but not expositions so manifestly satisfactory that we can demand a reader's assent to them. If truth be spoken, we must allow that all the expositions of *some parts* of the Revelation are nothing better than ingenious conjectures. We admire them as we read. We are not prepared to say that they are not true, or to furnish a reason for refusing our assent. But still they fail to carry conviction with them. We somehow feel the mark is not yet hit, the spring of the lock is not yet touched, the truth is not yet discovered.

But I appeal to the common sense of men, and their sense of fairness, and I ask them whether

they have a right to expect that such a book as the book of Revelation, can in the very nature of things be anything but dark and mysterious.

Here is a prophetic book which spans the mighty gulf between the end of the first century and the last judgment,—a book which was given to shew God's dealings with the church and the world during a space of well nigh 2000 years,—a book which points to the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms, with all the attendant wars and tumults over a third part of the habitable globe,—a book, above all, which does not tell its story in simple, plain matter of fact narration—but clothes it in majestic visions, parables, emblems, figures, and similitudes.

Here are we reading this book during a life of three score and ten years at most,—with all the cares and anxieties of this world pressing upon us,—with an understanding partaking in the corruption of the fall,—with a heart naturally earthly and sensual, and, even after conversion, weak and deceitful,—knowing little of ourselves,—knowing little of cotemporary history,—finding constantly how hard it is to discover the real truth about events happening in our own day. Is it likely,—is it probable,—is it agreeable to common sense, that such students coming to such a book should find

it anything but mysterious, and hard to understand? I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.

The plain truth is, that we are like children watching some mighty building in process of erection. They see a thousand operations which they are utterly unable to explain or comprehend. They see scaffolding and stones, and iron and brick, and mortar and timber and rubbish. They hear noise, and hammering, and cutting, and chipping. It seems to their eyes a vast scene of hopeless confusion. And yet to the eye of the architect all is order, system, and progress. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows exactly what is going on.

It is much the same with us in trying to pass a judgment on the application of many of the Apocalyptic visions. We are like those who stand on the outward surface of a sphere. The range of our mental vision is exceedingly limited. We know so little, and see so little, beyond our own circle,—the very pages of history are so often full of inaccuracies and lies, that we are really very poor judges of the question, whether such and such visions have been fulfilled or no. More light, I firmly believe, may yet be expected before the end come. Much may probably be yet unfolded and unsealed. But as to any certainty about the meaning of *all* parts

of the Apocalypse, when I see how little certainty there is about any thing 1000 miles from us in distance, or 100 years in time, I own I do not look for it until the Lord comes.

And here let me turn for a moment to those who secretly wonder why the Book of Revelation was not written more plainly, and why things of such vast interest to the Church have been purposely clothed in the mysterious garb of symbol, allegory, and vision.

I might easily remind such persons of Bishop Sherlock's remark on this very point:—"To inquire why the ancient prophecies are not clearer, is like inquiring why God has not given us more reason, or made us as wise as the angels." But I have no wish to leave them there. I would rather use an argument, which has often proved satisfactory to my own mind, and silenced the speculative questionings of a curious spirit.

I ask you then, whether you cannot see wisdom and mercy in the darkness which it has pleased God to throw around the prophetic history of his Church. You wonder in your own heart why the things to come were not more clearly revealed. But, consider for a moment how fearfully deadening and depressing it would have been to the early Christians, if they had clearly seen the long ages of darkness and corruption which were to elapse

before the Lord returned. Reflect for a moment how much unhappiness primitive believers were spared, by not knowing for certain the events which were to take place. If humble saints in the days of imperial persecution could have dreamed of the eighteen weary centuries during which the saints were yet to wait for their Lord from heaven, they might almost have sat down in flat despair. If Polycarp had foreseen the present state of Asia Minor,—or Ignatius that of Syria,—or Chrysostom that of Constantinople,—or Irenæus that of France—or Athanasius that of Egypt,—or Augustine that of Africa,—their hands might well have trembled, and their knees waxed faint.

Count up, I say, the dark and painful pages of which there are so many in the annals of church history. Set down in order the heresies, and false doctrines, and apostacies, of which there has been such a rank growth,—Arianism, and Romanism, and Socinianism, and Neologianism, and their kindred errors. Place before your mind's eye the centuries of ignorance and superstition before the Reformation, and of coldness and formality since Luther's generation passed away. Count up the crimes which have been perpetrated in the name of Christianity, the massacres, the burnings, the persecutions within the church,—not forgetting the Vallenses, the Albigenses, the Spanish Inquisition, the slaughter

of the Huguenots, and the fires of Smithfield. Do all this faithfully, and I think you will hardly avoid the conclusion, that it was wise mercy which drew so thick a veil over things to come. Wise mercy shewed the early Christians a light in the distance, but did not tell them how far it was away. Wise mercy pointed out the far off harbour lights, but not the miles of stormy sea between. Wise mercy revealed enough to make them work, and hope, and wait. But wise mercy did not tell all that was yet to be fulfilled before the end.

Who thinks of telling his little children in their early years, every trial, and pain, and misery which they may have to go through before they die? Who thinks of filling their tender ears with the particulars of every bodily disease they may have to endure, and every struggle for success in life in which they may have to engage. Who thinks of harrowing up their young souls by describing every bereavement they may have to submit to, or dilating on every deathbed they may have to watch? We do not do it because they could not understand our meaning, and could not bear the thought of it, if they did. And just so, it seems to me, does the Lord Jesus deal with his people in the Apocalyptic visions. He keeps back the full revelation of all the way they must go through, till the time when he sees they can bear it. He

considers our frame. He teaches and reveals as we are able to bear.

Time would not allow me to dwell longer on this part of my subject. After all, there is no argument so powerful as the simple Word of God. The predictions of Revelation may seem to many improbable and absurd. The differences and mistakes of interpreters may fill others with disgust and dislike to the very name of Apocalyptic study. The acknowledged mysteriousness, and confessed difficulties of the book, may incline many to shrink from perusing it. But there the book stands,—part of those Scriptures which are all given by inspiration, and all profitable. And there on the forefront of the book stands a promise and an encouragement to the reader and hearer: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear.” These words, no doubt, were spoken in foresight of the objections that men would raise against the study of the book. Give them their full weight. Fall back on them when all other arguments fail. They are a reserve which will never give way. God has said it, and will make it good. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy of this book.”

III. The third and last thing which I now wish to consider is, the number of useful lessons which the Book of Revelation is calculated to teach.

I am anxious to impress this point on your attention. I want you to establish it in your minds as a settled thing, that the Book of Revelation is an eminently profitable book for every reader of the Bible to study. It is a fountain to which the poorest and most unlearned shall never go in vain.

I say, then, that there are many blessed and comfortable truths scattered up and down, all over the Book of Revelation, which are intelligible to the simplest comprehension, and yet full of food for the most spiritual mind. God has mercifully so ordered the composition of the book, that there is hardly a chapter from which a man may not draw some striking and edifying thought. He may be unskilful in the interpretation of visions. He may have no idea of the meaning of seals, or trumpets, or vials,—of the two witnesses,—of the woman fleeing into the wilderness,—of the first or the second beasts. But still, if he perseveres in humble prayerful study of the whole book, he shall find in almost every page verses which shall richly repay his pains. They shall shine out on him like stars in the dark vault of heaven in a moonless night. They shall refresh him like an Oasis in the wilderness, and make it impossible for him to say, “All is barren.” They shall sparkle like precious stones on the shore, as he walks by the deep waters of the mys-

terious book, and make him feel that his journey in search of treasure is not in vain..

Let me select a few examples, in order to shew what I mean.

There is much about *the Lord Jesus Christ* in Revelation. There are names, and titles, and expressions about Him there, which we find nowhere else. There is new light thrown on His offices, His power, His care for His people. Surely this alone is no small matter. To know Jesus is life eternal: to abide in Him is to be fruitful. If we are indeed born of the Spirit we can never hear too much about our Saviour, our Shepherd, our High Priest and Physician. If our hearts are right in the sight of God we can never hear too much about our King. Like snow in summer, and good news from a far country, so are any fresh tidings about Christ.

There is much about the desperate *corruption of human nature* in Revelation. There is evidence on this subject in the Epistles to the seven Churches, in the repeated accounts of the incorrigibleness and impenitence of the nations of the earth under judgments, which we shall all do well to lay to heart. We can never be too well acquainted with our own sinfulness and weakness. The spring of all humility, thankfulness, grateful love to Christ, close walk with God, is a real, thorough, scriptural

knowledge of the wickedness of our own hearts. None will ever build high who does not begin low. The soul that loves much is the soul that feels its debt is great, and that much has been forgiven.

There is much about *hell* in Revelation. There are many fearful expressions which shew its reality, its misery, its eternity, its certainty. How deeply important is it to have clear views on this solemn subject in the present day! A disposition appears in some quarters to shrink from asserting the eternity of punishment. A flood of that miserable heresy, universalism, seems coming in upon us. Amiable and well-meaning enthusiasts are speaking smooth things about the love of God being beneath hell, and the mercy of God excluding the exercise of all his other attributes of justice and holiness. Tender-hearted women and intellectual men are catching at the theory that, after all, there is hope in the far distance for everybody, and that Satan's old assertion deserves credit, "Ye shall not surely die." Oh! brethren, beware of this delusion. Be not wise above that which is written. Believe me, it is a great thing to believe in the reality of hell. Study the Apocalyptic visions well, and you will find it hard to disbelieve it.

There is much about *heaven* in Revelation. I speak of heaven in the common acceptation of the word. I mean the future abode of the saints and

people of God. And I say that no book in God's Word tells us so much about heaven as the Apocalypse. If there was nothing else to be learned from the book beside this, we ought to be most thankful. Where is there a believer in the Lord Jesus who does not frequently think on the world to come and the resurrection state? Who that has lost a dear friend or relation, who died in the Lord, can abstain from meditating on the life of glory, and the place of meeting? Who among the people of God does not frequently reach forward in imagination into that unknown and unvisited abode, and strive to picture to his mind's eye the manner of the place and its employments? It is mysterious, no doubt. But nowhere is the veil so much lifted up as it is in the book of Revelation.

There is much about the *prospects of the Church of Christ* in the Revelation. When I speak of the Church I mean the Church of the elect, the living body of Christ, whose members are all holy. The pages of the Apocalypse shew plainly that the triumphs, and rest, and ease, and peace of that Church are not in this world. Its members must make up their minds to battles and fightings, to trial and persecution, to cross and affliction. They must be content to be a little flock, a poor and despised people, until the advent of Christ. Their good things are yet to come. Well would it be for

believers if they would learn from Revelation to moderate their expectations from missions, schools, and all other ecclesiastical machinery. Then should we not hear so often as we now do, of disappointment, and despondency, and depression among true Christians, and specially among ministers. We live in the time when God is taking out a people. These are the days of election, but not of universal conversion. We are yet in the wilderness. The bridegroom is not yet with us. The days of absence, and mourning, and separation are not yet past and gone.

There is much in Revelation to shew the *folly of depending entirely on the powers of this world* for the advancement of true religion. There is much to shew that believers should not look to kings, and princes, and rich men, and great men, for the bringing in and support of the kingdom of Christ. The times are not yet literally come when kings shall be the nursing fathers of the Churches. It is striking to observe how often the Apocalypse speaks of them as the enemies of God's cause, and not the friends. We need this lesson here in England. With a settled conviction that the principle of an established Church is scriptural and sound, I still feel we need reminding that alliance with the powers that be has its disadvantages as well as its advantages to the visible Church of

Christ. It is apt to engender indolence, apathy, and formality, among professing Christians. I firmly believe that the Church of England would have exerted itself more and done more for the world if its members had been more familiar with the book of Revelation, and learned from it to expect little from the state.

There is much in Revelation to shew the painful *childishness of the vast majority of true Christians* all over the world. Here we are, the greater part of us, scrambling and wrangling about the merest trifles,—contending about forms, and ceremonies, and outward matters of man's devising, as if they were the essentials of Christianity,—talking of order, and precedent, and custom, and routine, while millions of heathen are perishing for lack of knowledge, and myriads of our countrymen are dying as ignorant as the heathen around our own doors. And all this time the eternal purposes of God are rolling on to fulfilment—the kingdoms of this world are on the brink of dissolution—the day of judgment is at hand, and an hour draws nigh when Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and establishments, and voluntary Churches, shall be clean swept out of the way, and nothing but grace, faith, or heart-holiness, shall abide and stand the fire. Never, never do I for one read the Apocalypse without feeling the

excessive littleness of Christians. We are like children busy with our little houses of sand at low water by the sea side. The tide is rising. Our houses will soon be gone. Happy shall we be if we ourselves escape with our lives.

There is much in the last place in Revelation to shew *the safety of all true believers in Christ*, whatever may come upon the world. Awful as are the woes of which the Apocalypse speaks, there is not a syllable to shew that a hair shall fall from the head of any one of God's children. Hid like Noah in the ark—plucked like Lot from the fry judgment—withdrawn like Elijah from the reach of their enemies—rescued like Rahab from the ruin of all around—they at least may read the Revelation without being afraid. The book that looks dark and threatening to the world speaks no terrors to them. Like the wondrous pillar of cloud at Pi-hahiroth (Exod. xiv.), it may fill the mind of an ungodly man with gloom, but like the same cloud it shall give light by night to the people of God.

Brethren, what shall we say to these things? These are the things which stand forth plainly and unmistakeably in the book of Revelation. There is no mystery about them. They require no deep learning to understand. A humble mind and a prayerful heart will not fail to discover them.

These are the things which we can never know too well. The offices of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—the corruption of man—the reality of hell—the nature of heaven—the prospects of the Church—the folly of trusting in princes—the childishness of God's people—the safety of believers in the day of wrath—these are the kind of subjects with which we cannot be too familiar. These are the plain lessons which, with all its many difficulties, Revelation will unfold. Verily if these things are engraven deeply on our minds, our reading of the Apocalypse will be blessed indeed.

These are the kind of things which Satan labours hard to keep us from. Well may that old enemy fill men's minds with prejudice against Apocalyptic study. Well may he suggest the evil thought, it is all mysterious, it is all too deep, we need not read it. Let us resist him in this matter. Let us cleave to Revelation more closely every year. Let us never doubt that it is a profitable study for our souls.

It only remains now to conclude this Sermon with three practical remarks:—

(1.) For one thing, let us all thank God that the things needful to salvation are all clear, plain, and devoid of mystery to a humble mind. Whatever difficulties there may be in the visions of the

Apocalypse, the most unlearned reader of the Bible shall never miss the way to heaven, if he seek to find it in a childlike and prayerful spirit.

The guilt, and corruption, and weakness of man is not a hidden thing like a seal, a trumpet, or a vial.

Christ's power and willingness to save, and justification by faith in Him, are not a dark thing like the number 666.

The absolute necessity of a new birth and a thorough change of heart is not an uncertainty, like the meaning of the two witnesses.

The impossibility of salvation without meetness for heaven is not a mystery, like the interpretation of the vision of the four living creatures.

But, oh ! remember while you thank God for this clear teaching in the things essential to salvation, that this very clearness increases your personal responsibility. Take heed lest an open door being set before you, any of you should fail to enter in by it and be saved.

Hearken, every one of you, and understand. Carry it away with you and think of it in your own homes. You may reach heaven without knowing much about the deep things of the Apocalypse, but you will never get there without the saving knowledge of Christ, and a new heart. You must be born again. You must renounce

your own righteousness and acknowledge yourself a sinner. You must wash in the fountain of Christ's blood. You must be clothed in the garment of Christ's righteousness. You must take up the cross of Christ and follow him.

These are the things absolutely needful. These are the things without which no man, learned or unlearned, high or low, can ever be saved.

Rest not, rest not till you know these things by experience. Without them you may know the whole list of Apocalyptic commentaries,—be familiar with all that Mede, and Brightman, and Cressener, and Daubuz, and Durham, and Cunningham, and Woodhouse, and Elliott, have written on the subject, and yet rise at the last day a lost soul,—knowing much intellectually, like the devils, but, like the devils, ruined for ever.

2. For another thing, let me entreat all students of the book of Revelation, to beware of dogmatism and positiveness, in expressing and maintaining their views of the meaning of its more mysterious portions.

Nothing, I firmly believe, has brought more discredit on the study of prophecy, than the excessive rashness, and overweening confidence with which many of its advocates have asserted the correctness of their own interpretations, and impugned the expositions of others. Too many have

written and talked as if they had a special revelation from heaven, and as if it was impossible for any one to maintain a character for common sense, if he did not see with their eyes.

Let us all watch our hearts and be on our guard against this spirit. Dogmatism is a great trap which Satan lays in men's way when he cannot prevent them studying the Apocalypse. Let us not fall into it. Let us rather pray for a spirit of modesty and humility in offering our solutions of the deep things of symbolical prediction. Let us allow that we may possibly be wrong, and that others may possibly be right. Believe me, we all need this caution. We are unhappily prone to be most positive when we have least warrant for our assertions; simply because our pride whispers that our credit for discernment is at stake, and that having made statements mainly on the authority of our own judgment, we are specially bound to defend them.

Happy is that student of prophecy who is willing to confess that there are many things of which he is yet ignorant. Happier still, and more uncommon too, is he who is able to use those three hardest words in the English language, "I was mistaken."

3. Finally, let all believers take comfort in the thought that the end to which all things are coming is clear, plain, and unmistakeable. There

may yet be judgments in store for the world, of which we know nothing. There may be distress of nations with perplexity far exceeding anything we have yet heard, read, or seen. There may be more grievous wars, and famines, and pestilences, and persecutions yet to come.

But the end is sure. Yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. The kings of the earth may struggle and contend for their own worldly interests; but sooner or later the kingdoms of this world, shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ. There shall be an eternal peace. He shall come and take possession whose right it is. The dominion and power shall be given to the saints of the Most High, and of the increase of their peace shall be no end.

Oh! that we may all remember this. In patience let us possess our souls, and in every trying time do as Luther did,—repeat the forty-sixth Psalm:—

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

“Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

“Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most high.

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

"The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

"Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

"He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah."

LECTURE II.

THE SALUTATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ADVENT.

BY THE REV. W. HARRISON,

RECTOR OF BIRCH, ESSEX.

REVELATION I. 4—8.

“John to the seven churches which are in Asia : Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come ; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne ; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

As the sailor enters the Grecian Archipelago on his way to Constantinople, with the coast of Asia Minor on his right hand, and the easternmost point of Crete (the Salmone of St. Paul), behind him, he sees numerous points of land in all directions. The scene is both interesting and striking. No sooner does one fade from view than another appears. After sailing, however, some seventy miles, and in order to get round the bluff of a large island before him, he is obliged to stand out from a smaller one which lies somewhat closer in to the Lydian and Carian coasts. The aspect of this isle is nothing uncommon, save that it looks rocky and barren, as it is. His eye, as it rests upon it, is not attracted by it, unless he be a Christian, and, until he knows that the precipice, for such it seems at a distance, is none other than Patmos, the place of exile of John, the last surviving and best loved of the apostles, and the scene of the latest, the grandest, and the most awful of God's revelations to man.

Then, indeed, he gazes upon it with far different feelings. Those precipices towering up towards the clouds, that lonely islet which looks like a mountain top emerging from a deluge,—they call up before his mind's eye the past, the present, and the future. They carry him back to the day when the Roman sceptre, under Domitian, swayed the

world. They carry him forward to that day when Rome herself shall be no more, and the sceptre of Jesus Christ shall rule over all. They carry him into the chambers of his own heart, and compel him to ask himself what the coming of Christ will be *to him*.

What opposite, but mighty scenes of interest lie around that Isle! Fronting it, on the east, is Miletus, where Paul for the last time charged the elders of Ephesus. History and fable conspire to celebrate its neighbourhood. There is Mycale, the scene of the bloody battle between Greek and Persian, which for the time liberated Greece and Ionia. In another direction lies the Island of Icaria, where fable has found a grave for the aspiring Icarus. And then, as the eye sweeps along the land, we see the direction, though we cannot discern the locality of those seven Churches, to which John, from his rocky pulpit, delivered the message of his august Master, and declared the future fortunes of His Church.

Yes! and with what a thrilling interest must the traveller now gaze on that lonely spot! It is not merely that 1800 years have rolled away since that message was delivered,—it is not that these seven Churches, one and all, lost their faith and their candlestick; it is that they have brought us, who are now living, to a point in the prophetic history which was revealed then, on which the

finger of faith and of devout study may be laid, with the humble enquiry,—When shall these things be? Not—When shall Paganism fall, and the temple of the idolater crumble before the worship of Jesus Christ? but—When shall the end of all things be? When shall Jerusalem arise and be built? When shall Babylon fall, like a mighty millstone cast into the sea?

It is my task this evening to bring before you the announcement of this time—not of the special season, but of the fact. Nor yet that there is any thing new to be brought forth in the statement. This announcement was made centuries ago, and has been read by believing eyes, and heard by believing ears, perhaps every day since it was delivered. And yet it has not arrived! Why then was it announced? That the Church of Christ might learn to wait in faith and patience, and to keep herself watchful. St. Peter expresses this while he warns us not to be impatient (2 Peter iii. 9—12), “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise—But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night—Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought *ye* (of every age) to be in all holy conversation and godliness, *looking for* and *hasting* unto the coming of the day of God?”

But surely the interest attached to this subject

must be ever deepening with the flight of years ! Each revolution of time removes some portion, however thin, from the veil which conceals the future. And we are standing so much nearer the long promised object as 1850 years can bring us. How increasingly needful is it that we stand complete in the armour of God's Holy Spirit ! that we should lift up our heads as those who hear something going on outside the doors, and are on the alert to know what it is, and that we rejoice as those who believe that the time of their redemption from sin and sorrow, and from a world of unrest and blasphemy, is at hand.

Let us commence with enquiring into the general character of this announcement. The venerable prisoner and preacher stands on his pulpit and addresses himself to the Seven Churches which lay within the opposite coast. They were then flourishing in their splendour and glory. They had not yet received the admonition of the Great Bishop, and their candlesticks were still standing burning and unmoved. But the apostle is now charged to address them in the name of his Lord. He begins, therefore, with saluting them in the name of the Trinity. He next invites them to unite with him in an ascription of praise to the Redeemer. He then announces in most startling graphic language, the second advent of the Lord,

and concludes by proclaiming the style and title of his Master. These are the points to which I have to direct your attention, and that I may do so the more successfully, let me transfer for the time the address of the apostle from the Asiatic Churches to this congregation. Let me suppose—but why suppose? Are not these words—is not this prophecy addressed to you as much as to them? Are you not as solemnly and as closely interested in their fulfilment as ever was Ephesus, or Smyrna, or Laodicea? To you, then, the venerable John speaks this night in his Master's name. "Grace be unto you," &c.

I. Consider what it is that is addressed to you. A message of grace and peace is sent to you. In this salutation what condescension, what abounding mercy and love! The apostle invokes the august and Holy Triune JEHOVAH. First named is He from whom all the springs of thought and action, of will, purpose, and government, do take their rise, the Everlasting Father. To assure you of the actuality of the message, and of Him who sends it, John describes His being as none other can be described. He comprehends in Himself the attributes of time and eternity. "He was, and is, and is to come." And by this very title He condescends to express the security of His blessings. *His* grace and peace are not the

empty compliments and protestations of one sinful man to another. They are everlasting mercies, they are fruitful assurances, they are abounding blessings conveyed on the word and being of Him, who, because He can swear by no greater, vouchsafes to swear by Himself. Wheresoever they alight, they bless. Whosoever receives them, receives inexhaustible treasures of good things. The infinite Father pledges His friendly assurance to His sinful but believing creature, on the faith of His own being !

But the salutation contains another name. This delightful greeting comes also from the seven spirits before the throne. I shall not enter into a critical discussion respecting this expression, further than to say, that the number here given is frequently used in Scripture as a symbol of perfection ; and that, looking at the subject and the undoubted mention of the other two Sacred Persons of the Divine Trinity, there can be as little doubt that by this expression is intended the Holy Spirit of God. The propriety of including His benediction is obvious. If the Father be the fountain and source from whence all blessings flow, and the Son be the meritorious cause of their application to us, the Holy Spirit is Himself the agent between them and us, being Himself the applier of all the good which we ever receive. To

Him indeed grace and peace may well be attributed, for is it not He who worketh all in all, dividing to every man severally as He will? He it is who presides in the Church of Christ controlling, assisting, directing. Without Him there is neither gift nor grace, neither sight nor speech, neither love nor holiness; for He it is that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Sweetly drops the kindly greeting then from His wings as He hovers over the little flock of Christ's chosen ones. He dwelleth with them and in them. The Father sends His blessing, but the Spirit witnesses of it within us. He takes of the things of God and of Christ, and shews them unto us. If indeed anything special be intended in the use of the numeral, may it not be to shew the believer the fulness and integrity of the blessing? as much as to say, 'To him that believeth belongs the fulness and perfection of grace and peace.' Thus all is secured.

But the greeting is not complete without the name of Him who purchased these blessings for His people: and so the salutation runs, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness and the first-begotten from the dead and the prince of the kings of the earth." Why is this name reserved for the last. Because it sets the seal to the blessing. Because the blessing, whatever it

be, was purchased by Him. And there is a deep meaning in the titles which are here used respecting Him. First, He is the faithful witness. Christ came into this world to be a witness—a witness to the truth. He came to sweep away the works of the devil, all those inventions and lies with which he and his poor tools overlay and deface and impair God's truth. See what a light He threw upon everything connected with man's sins and duties, his hopes and fears. He brought life and immortality to light. And faithful was He to His work; so faithful that He sealed it with His blood. His witness cost Him His life. Next, He is the first-begotten of the dead, the eldest son of the grave. Having paid the penalty of His fidelity as a witness, He now receives His reward. He is raised from the dead, the first-fruits of the grave. And being thus raised, He is exalted to the dignity of the Mediatorial Throne, for He is installed as "Prince of the kings of the earth." Kings rule over men, but Jesus Christ rules over kings. Men are their subjects, kings are His. Men owe fealty to them, but they owe it to Him. What a propriety there is in closing the salutation with His name. Who so fit, who so ready, who so empowered to bless me as Jesus, the faithful witness, the first-born from the dead, the Prince of all earthly sovereigns?

What is it then which the venerable apostle invokes for you? It is grace and peace. Grace, the free-gift and love of God, and peace the seal and fruits thereof. What greater blessing could we desire on this side the grave? What else can prepare us for the second coming of Christ? Graceless Christians are peaceless Christians. Indeed they have but little title to the name. And who shall stand when He appeareth who has not grace in his heart and peace by faith? Sweet as the salutation may be to our ears, we shall do well to secure it in our hearts. He, the aged exile, banished from his country, his churches and his fellow-Christians, yet possessed both. But he possessed them, because he lived in close communion with his Lord.

II. Let us attend however to the invitation which follows this greeting. The apostle summons you to unite in a grand ascription of praise to Christ. And what language does he put into our mouths? Perhaps no words were ever put together which so completely embodied the sum of a sinner's obligations to Christ. They are so full, so true, so grand, so affecting, that they may form a subject for constant meditation. Wouldest thou know, O Christian, what Christ has done for thee? Listen. "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and

hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The steps of human salvation and glory are perfect. They begin with love and end with intimate association with God. In short the whole economy of grace is contained in these words—"Unto Him that loved us." This seems but a truism until we place it in the light of eternity with its consequences. For what is it that He loved? To love pure and holy beings would be but natural to a pure and holy being. "But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Abstractedly it is almost inconceivable that sinners should be regarded with feelings of tenderness by One whose province it is to uphold truth, justice, and holiness; and whose whole nature must be not only affronted by sin but intrinsically and insuperably opposed to it. Yet it is so: and herein is the result of one of these vast combinations of the Divine character, which, if they do not perplex our finite conceptions, are at least above them. What is the whole scheme of grace but a mystery arising out of these combinations? To commence an ascription of praise to Christ therefore, with a statement of His love, manifests an exquisite perception of the sublimity of the Divine character, besides that it expresses the foundation

upon which the whole fabric of human redemption is erected.

But to this the venerable apostle adds the first act and sign of redeeming love: "and washed us from our sins in His own blood." The love of Jesus is not an empty profession. It is a power. It comes to men in their sins, but it does not leave them there. What would it profit any sinner to be assured of the love of Christ and to be left in his guilt and criminality, his pollution and depravity? All the assurances in the world would not rid his soul of one dark blot, nor enable him to enjoy the condition of pure and happy beings. If Jesus therefore comes to a sinner, He cleanses him, for His blood "cleanseth from all sin." It is Jesus who washes the sinner, not the sinner himself. True, he must believe ere he can be cleansed. He must come to Jesus as the leper did. He must apply for the pardon and the grace. But Jesus must do all the rest. And there is an exquisite tenderness in the apostle's particularizing of this truth, coupled with the fact that it is in *His own blood*." What an apprehension of redeeming love is herein displayed! The picture, if such it may be called, is finished with affecting detail. Jesus is both priest and victim. He first lays down His life and then imparts its benefits to His people. But besides this, we must not fail to

notice how the apostle preserves the order and perfection of doctrinal truth in this statement. The two grand operations of the work of Christ, as regards the person of the sinner, are those of justification and sanctification. The one is preparatory to the other. Before we are presented with the climax of our glory, we are reminded of the essential path to it. If we enter into the presence of God, as is implied by our subsequent titles, we must pass through the blood-stained way of His flesh. The cleansing of the sanctuary must be applied without, and we can stand before the awful presence of the Lord only as justified, and so prepared, through the Atonement at the door.

But then, when washed; when all impurity, even to the faintest stain is, done away; when we stand complete in Him, "dressed in beauty not our own," to what are we brought? A royal priesthood is not thought too much for us. We are made "kings and priests unto God and His Father." We say that this is not thought too much for us. True it is that the royal priesthood is the original prerogative of man. It belongs to him by birthright. "Lord," asks the Psalmist, "what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things under his

feet." Here is his birthright of royalty. And what of His priesthood? Surely the two things are inseparable in the original constitution of man. Man was made to be creation's mouthpiece, to offer up the bloodless sacrifices of righteousness and praise. And to this state precisely it is that the Gospel brings him back. Under the law there was a distinct priesthood, because there was a distinct law, but when there was made an end of sins and reconciliation for iniquity, and when everlasting righteousness was brought in, then reverted the charter to its original possessors, and God's Israel became, what Israel proper was intended to be, and praised be God, will yet be—a kingdom of priests.

But behold this charter. It is no longer the same. Its provisions, its privileges, its securities are infinitely increased. What the apostle says of the Mosaic law is wonderfully true of this charter. The law being changed, there is made of necessity a change in the priesthood. Our position is changed, our priesthood is changed with it. Oh, had we not fallen, we could not have risen to this height. What we lost in Adam has been repaid a thousandfold in Christ. He hath made us kings and priests—not of an earthly dominion and service, but of a heavenly glory and employment. Kings we shall be, for we shall wear crowns of

glory, and share the throne of the King of kings. Not only in Christ, but in ourselves, we shall be raised above all created things: for we are brethren of Him who fills the throne. And priests we shall be, not only to God, but to *His Father*. Oh, the beauty and delicacy of this touch! Having washed us in His own blood, and so made us clean, He has prepared us for the highest honours that the creature can wear. He takes us therefore into partnership with Himself. He sets us above earthly princes. He brings us near to the throne of the infinite and invisible God, and He constitutes us into an order which keeps us for ever in the presence of JEHOVAH. Was there not a meaning in His resurrection words, "I go to *my* Father and *your* Father, and to *my* God and *your* God?" Are they not explained in the royal priesthood of believers? Christian brethren, we ought to rise to this conception! Should we be content to live at this poor dying rate? Oh, if there is one spark of spiritual life in our hearts, ought it not to be wakened into a flame? ought not our hearts to be roused to utter the song which the apostle calls upon us to sing, "Unto Him," &c.

III. Believe this, that such a state of holy gratitude is the fittest preparation for what follows, It is evident that the apostles would thus prepare

the mind for the solemn announcement of the second advent. "Behold," he says, for he is now about to summon the attention of the Church to the great object of his Revelation, "Behold! He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." With what a simple majesty, but with what singular force and propriety this announcement is made. In these few words, the Spirit of God brings before our eyes a whole drama. There is the advent with its circumstances; and there is the catastrophe with its results. That which occupies but a few moments to announce, would take hours to unfold in its details. This indeed we cannot do now; we must content ourselves with the general announcement, as it bears practically and experimentally upon our personal condition at this time. The whole of this language is adapted to its purpose. The very brevity and conciseness of the statement is suitable to its design. Let us thus briefly notice its general features.

Our attention is first called to the *manner* of this solemn event. "He cometh with clouds." This is indeed His own declaration, which He Himself made when answering before the high priest, and the intention of it is to represent the heavenly majesty and glory in which He will then

appear. "The clouds," says a prophet, "are the dust of His feet." He descended in them when he came to Sinai. He veiled Himself in one when He appeared at the door of the tabernacle, and on the mercy-seat; and upon them will He appear for the first time as the human Judge of human beings when this announcement is fulfilled. Those masses of vapour, many-hued, will subserve, like any or all of His creations, to His glory. And they are peculiarly fitted to impress it upon sensuous and imaginative creatures like men. Now dark and black, rolling their inky volumes over the sky, they will fill the mind of the gazer with awe and terror, especially as the lightnings of His glory and wrath dart from beneath their dusky folds. Now pervaded with light from His presence, they will dazzle and confound the unprepared and cowering eye. But upon them will He ride, and that full royally. Not the rejected Man of Sorrows, who had not where to lay His head; not the patient and gracious Master, waiting till we return and repent; but the Divine and Inflexible Judge, at sight of whom the earth shall reel like a drunkard, and the ungodly and unbelieving shall call upon the rocks and hills to cover them. "Behold, He cometh."

And what the bearings of this event? "Every eye shall see Him." There is a reason for stating

this." Man is so deceived by his sins, that he might think it possible that in so vast an assemblage of human beings *some* might escape observation; *some* might be forgotten in the roll call; *some* might even have lost life and existence together. But no! *There is nothing lost!* Never did God make a single atom that will become nothing again. And what is more, nothing will ever cease to be what it was made: the rudiments of creation, whatever they may be, remain the same. And so "*every eye shall see Him.*" Not one of Adam's many children will fail to see that sight. And mark the force of the expression. It is not that every one shall appear before Him, nor that He will see every one—but that every *eye* shall see Him—every eye shall be compelled to meet His eye. Now we know what is the sense and the power of the eye. The eye is the directest road to the apprehension. The old proverb, "Seeing is believing," shews this. We know also what is the power of an eye upon the animal senses, how it affects them according to its various emotions, and according to the nature and power of the individual who looks at us, or our inward sense and relation towards him. We read of quailing before an eye—of cowering with an eye—of being ravished with a look—of being overpowered with a glance, or a gaze. When, therefore,

St. John tells us that "every eye shall see Jesus Christ," he implies all the emotions, all the associations, all the connexions, all the results which will flow from our moral and spiritual state towards Him, and from His consequent feeling towards us. Thus unregenerate, unbelieving, uncleansed sinners, will regard Him with a terror which it would be an impertinence to attempt to describe. They will be so conscious of their utter unsuitableness to Him; they will be so astonished at the *reality* of what He was, and is, as the Saviour whom they *might have* had, and the Judge to whom they *must* bow—that an agony, insupportable in every way, will seize on them—and thus hell will commence with them. On the other hand, every regenerate heart, all who have been justified by faith, and sanctified by the indwelling Spirit, will, by the same consciousness, look towards Him who loved them, washed them, and consecrated them; and if they are overpowered, as doubtless they will be, it will be by the agony of extacy, that they at last *realize* Him to whom they owe salvation, from its first dawning up to its ultimate completion: and thus their heaven will begin.

But here are some specially named. Who are these that possess this sad—this awful distinction? They are "they which pierced Him." Of all

beings, they are surely the persons to whom Divine wisdom must eventually justify itself. For they who crucified Him, from the wretched man who betrayed Him, down to the soldier who pierced His side, must be convinced who and what He was, as publicly as they disowned Him. They crucified Him in unbelief and contempt; for had the princes of this world known who and what He was, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They must be compelled to see and acknowledge the truth, even though it be to their eternal damnation. It is possible, nay, let us believe that out of the many who had a voice and a hand in this deed, some have fore-judged themselves, and have turned to that blood which they shed in mockery, but afterwards adored in faith. Perhaps the centurion, who was persuaded that this was a righteous man—perhaps the man who gave Him the sponge filled with vinegar—perhaps he who gained the seamless vesture for his share of the spoil—may have been among that blessed number. But all the rest shall see Him, so as to recognize Him, so as to confess that He whom they betrayed, tried, condemned, and crucified, is none other than the Lord of all things, who had come from heaven to earth to save them.

But it is added, that “all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him,” a remarkable expres-

sion, and with a distinctive purpose. Some have supposed that this refers to the Jews, but I see no other reason for such a supposition than the use of the word "kindreds," which literally means "tribes"—the tribes of the land. But surely the apostle had a wider scope than this. In the *effects* of the Saviour's advent all must find a place, for all must feel it for good or for evil. And this distinctive force of the word I take to mean this, that while the company of believers is gathered out of all nations and generations, not in bodies, but in the sad separateness of individual faith, they who have rejected the Messiah are the kindreds, the families of the earth. And they shall mourn because of Him; that is, they shall beat their breasts in the wild agony of despair. Various portions of God's word represent the despair which will seize men when they discover the mistake which they have made in not receiving Christ into their hearts. The well known passage in Proverbs i. will doubtless occur to your minds. I do not make any allusion to the nations which have never heard of Christ. We have, alas! kindreds enough out of those who have. We have enough in England alone. The last census on Public Worship, proclaims how many kindreds of Christ-despising, Christ-rejecting people there are in this Gospel land. Is it

not right that they should mourn when they see Him whose long-suffering they tried, whose love they spurned, whose blood they trampled on? And, therefore, the holy Apostle adds, "Even so, amen." And he calls upon you to pronounce the same. Can *you* do so? None can but they who believe that Jesus is righteous when He taketh vengeance, none but they who have the spirit of Jesus in their hearts. For what is it? It is the triumph of truth over falsehood, and of holiness over sin. And what child of God does not desire that? Away then with the imposture of a licentious mercy. It belongs not to Him whose name is love—for it is *the Lamb* that shall make war and put His enemies to an open shame. Nor can we even *pity* them. "Even so," says the old man, whose last sermons were, "Little children, love one another." EVEN SO, AMEN! God grant that it may be so: for *it is right*, and what is right must be good, and merciful, and true, for, "whoever perished being innocent?" And where will be the lost soul in a Gospel land like this, who has not had his opportunities, his secret convictions, his warnings, his appeals? What infidel is there who had not sufficient evidence that the Bible is true, when on the same amount of evidence he would have believed in the most outrageous theories of philosophy or metaphysics? Away

then with all licentious mercy, for it is the pity of a murderer, the tenderness of a devil. Even so, Lord Jesus ! Amen.

IV. And as if to confirm the devout prayer of His apostle and His Church, what follows ? The sanction of the Lord Himself, who proclaims thus His own style, and thus ratifies and avows what has been uttered, as well as that which is yet to come. There is something peculiarly grand in this proclamation. The apostle had given utterance to some awful truths and prayers. He was about to utter the most solemn prophecy which God ever committed to a man. And therefore the Lord Himself endorses, as it were, the whole undertaking by interposing this declaration of His person and nature, " I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty." It is the opinion of some that this is the declaration of the Father and not of Christ, more especially as the Greek text is considered to be properly, "saith God (*Θεος*) not saith the Lord (*ὁ Κυριος*)," under which reading the proclamation would signify God's assent to the statement. But looking at the peculiar way in which the whole Apocalypse is intended to be the communication of Christ to His Church, and especially that He claims this title at the close of the

Book, I am disposed with many respectable authorities to interpret the declaration as His, even while retaining the reading of the word "God." To what does it amount? It amounts to this that Jesus Christ, as very and true God, the beginning and the ending; that is, existing before anything was made, and comprehending all things in His own existence, to whom alone belongs eternity, and who is the Almighty by virtue of this declaration, pronounces not only that all which is said in this revelation is right and true, but that He has the power to carry it all out in all its parts. Indeed, may we not go yet further? May we not say that in this proclamation Jesus Christ draws aside for the first time the veil which hides His real majesty from our eyes. Never before had He expressly assumed to Himself these august titles. He had intimated them, He had permitted them to be expressed by His apostles, but He had never till now formally assumed them. More than once He repeats them afterwards, but here He does so to confirm the truth of what His apostle was about to hear and see. It is Jesus then whom we are contemplating under this majesty of title. And right it is that He should be seen in His real nature, for thus only could the height and depth of His love be understood. But when this is seen we see all the mystery of love. We see Deity in

all the work of redemption. We see the condescension of Him who became man, and the malignity and demerit of that which required so amazing a humiliation. In this revelation of His nature do we not understand His lordship, His sovereignty, His intrinsic power to govern and ordain? Do we not even obtain a glimpse of that mystery which St. Paul expresses in 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28, "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that *God may be all in all.*" Oh! with what feelings of adoring admiration should all welcome this uplifting of the veil which shrouds the Saviour and Father of man from our eye! How should we exult, rather than hesitate at the thought that this God is our God for ever and ever, and that the Child which was born to us, and the Son which was given, was not only the Everlasting Father, but the Mighty God which is all in all!

Let us then draw our meditations on this absorbing subject to a close. It is one profitable for reproof, and for correction. This magnificent display of the Divine purpose which we have been considering—What should it effect in us? We are summoned by the tongue of a dead yet living

apostle, by the flight of time, by the drawing on of events, by the circumstances of the day in which we are living, and by the voice of Jesus Christ Himself, to attend to the announcement of His second coming. How near or how distant it may actually be, we know not. It is sufficient for us to know that there is a stir on the world's highway outside our doors, that the fig tree is hastening and we must look up and listen. Let me then make a personal application of these points to you.

And first let me ask, Can *you* accept the salutation which the apostle sends to you? He sends you grace and peace from the throne of the triune God, from the Father, the Spirit, and the Son; can you receive it? Can you receive it and not join in the ascription of praise which follows? Are you unable to unite in that ascription, and can you receive it? Oh! believe it solemnly, that union with Christ, justification and sanctification must take precedence of all favour and peace on the part of God towards you. What hast thou to do with peace who hast no grace? and where is thy grace when thou hast no faith, no love, no union with Jesus? Thou hast not even a title to the common mercies of daily life. Thou art alive by sufferance, thou art preserved by long suffering, and for how long? Tremble,

all of you whose hearts repentance and faith have not visited. What sense can you have of the love of Christ? Dark will your doom be if the eye of Christ should rest upon you, as you are, on that day.

And if it be that you can claim the portion of His children, oh! what joy is before you! What an assurance have you in the coming struggle that you are guarded by a triple shield of love! Who shall harm you? Who shall disturb you when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost send you grace and peace.

But let me ask once more, What is your feeling with regard to the coming of Christ? You have heard that He is coming,—How do you feel respecting His appearing? Great things, beloved, are promised to them that love *that*. A crown of glory is in store for you. And not without reason is this state of heart given as a test when we reflect upon the reasons which make men fear it. What makes men put away the subject from their thoughts? What makes them, when they do think of it, feel a nervous apprehension on the subject? Is it not that they feel a sense of guilt unrepealed, a consciousness that they do not love Jesus so much as to make His arrival and kingdom more welcome than the state in which they are now living? Surely a higher order of feeling and

desire is requisite than that which prevails among us. Surely it is not enough to wish for the spread of religion, for order, for brotherly kindness, for the distribution of human happiness, for general philanthropy. The advent of Christ is a *personal* matter, a question of *personal* hopes and fears, of *personal* fitness or unfitness, of *personal* affection or dislike. Let none of us think then that this announcement is agreeable to him, unless he knows that the sight of Christ's face will be the gladdest that ever he could see: not as a signal of escape from trouble and trial, but as the joy of the heart when it gushes forth to meet its beloved. Worldly hearts can burst into raptures at worldly things; doubt not that spiritual hearts can feel the same for spiritual delights, and of all delights the sight of Christ will be the greatest.

It is highly important that we should come to a conclusion on this point. There is a great tendency in the heart when it is enlightened, but not converted, to rest in a general religion. Religion is, as it were, held in solution. It is neither condensed nor defined, but there is a sort of vague mistiness about all *personal* experience. Now this is precisely the sort of religion which will not do when Christ comes, and it is precisely the sort of religion which is not very desirous that He should

come. Yet I greatly fear that this is the character of the religion of multitudes.

Let us note then, once for all, that the appearing of Christ can be a subject of joy to none but those to whom He is precious; to whom, that is, He is known as a present Saviour, who has washed them in His own blood and made them kings and priests to His Father. Nothing short of this blessed experience will allow any man to desire that sight. It is all very well for men to talk loosely about faith and hope, to discuss theoretical views of the second coming, to trace the bearings or apply the events of unfulfilled prophecy; but be assured, that no man can honestly aver his joyful expectation of the advent of Christ, unless he has personal reasons for knowing that this event will bring to him all he has looked, prayed and lived for. So then if we cannot affirm that our sins are blotted out, that we are one with Jesus by a living faith, that we have passed from death to life, that we are in short new creatures, it is but an act of self-deception to profess either our faith in this event or our hope that it may soon take place.

Yet let it gladden some hearts to know that they shall not love nor hope in vain. Some there are, strangers and pilgrims, to whom the sojourn of this life is but a weary time, not from a morbid

desire of departure, nor from an unbecoming impatience of trial, but because they have drank deeply into the mind and glory of Christ, and they growingly feel the inability of earthly things to meet them. There is a suffering of which some are honoured with a taste, some choice companions of the Lord who have been instructed in the deeper mysteries of the kingdom, and have learnt to walk closely with Him. It is a *suffering of spirit*, such as their Master frequently felt when dealing with men. In one place He is represented as *sighing deeply* in His spirit; in another, as being *grieved*. And are there not some in each generation to be found, to whom the hardness, or the dulness, the grossness, or the unbelief of the professing Christian world is a constant source of grief and of sighing? They feel that they are not met nor understood by the babes who ought to be men. To such, what will Christ's coming be? Deep, solemn, terribly joyful, will be their emotions as it bursts upon them. "Here in the body pent," they have endured the absence of their Lord, and the presence of all that is opposed to Him. Their state of heart is well depicted in the following lines,—

" The serpent's brood increase,
The powers of hell grow bold,
The conflict thickens, faith is low,
And love is waxing cold.

“ How long, O Lord our God,
Holy, and true, and good,
Wilt Thou not judge Thy suffering Church,
Her sighs, and tears, and blood ?
Come then, Lord Jesus, come.”

But then all will be over—all trial of patience and of heart, all weariness and painfulness, all sighing and disappointment. Their companions in arms who had gone before them will greet them, the ministering angels will welcome them, Jesus, the crown of their joy, will receive them, and they shall be “for ever with the Lord.”

My dear hearers, let us try and join them. Let us begin to walk more closely with Jesus. Let us aim at having weaned hearts. Let us separate ourselves more than we do from the things and men of this world. Let us not be content with spiritual notions, and spiritual imaginations, and a spiritual phraseology, but let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, His spirit, His devotion, His heavenly-mindedness, His separateness; and then, as we too feel how the world knoweth less and less of us, and we are less and less of it, that day which is coming will so grow into distinctness and reality in our thoughts and affections, that whether we go to meet it, or have to await its arrival, we shall hail it as the gladdest, brightest dawn that ever broke upon our eyes.

LECTURE III.

THE VISION OF THE REVEALER.

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REVELATIONS I. 12—18.

“ And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the Sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right

hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death."

THE REVELATION AND ITS BLESSING, THE SALUTATION also and ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ADVENT have already been considered in this place. We have now to consider THE VISION OF THE REVEALER, as that is set forth in the verses before us.

It is altogether impossible, within the compass of a short discourse, to do any justice to so large and mighty a subject. All that I shall attempt, is to give a general outline ; those who are acquainted with Holy Scripture and taught of the Spirit of truth, will fill up its details for themselves.

The Revealer has already been declared to be the Lord Jesus ; "The revelation of Jesus Christ" it is written (ver. 1), "which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants." Two things therefore present themselves here before us.

I. Where He appeared.

II. How He appeared.

1. He appeared in the midst of seven golden candlesticks ; and as the disciple saw Him, He was walking up and down among them (chap. ii. 1). We can be at no loss to understand this symbol ; "the seven candlesticks" he himself de-

clares "are the seven Churches" (ver. 20). The Church of Christ, wherever it is planted, is for giving forth the light of God. It is therefore most fitly represented by a candlestick. "Ye are the light of the world," said our Lord to His early disciples; "men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick" (Matt. v. 14, 15). In the tabernacle of Moses there was but one candlestick, for from Moses to Christ there was but one Church. Palestine was then Immanuel's land, the only locality on earth where the name of God was recorded, and the multiplication of Churches was impossible. But the state of things now, is altogether opposite; the disciple therefore saw not one candlestick but seven. At Ephesus, at Smyrna, at Pergamos, at Thyatira, at Sardis, at Philadelphia, at Laodicea, the same light was shining—shining independently—shining forth from a people who walked in the fear of God and in the knowledge of His holy name. And these Churches were symbols of universality. In every nation, city, community, the Church of God should be found. And wherever two or three call faithfully on the Saviour's name, there that Church is found. We call it sometimes the Church, sometimes the Churches. The Church is the aggregate—"all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our

Lord" (1 Cor. i. 2). The Churches are that aggregate broken up into fragments, as Christians are found in different nations, cities and communities. It was so in the days of St. John. One Christian was found dwelling at Ephesus, and another at Smyrna; one at Pergamos, and another at Thyatira; one at Sardis, one at Philadelphia, and one again at Laodicea. And it is so still, and will be to the end. But this ought to be the only difference between the Churches of God. They ought to have one doctrine of truth, one godly order, one discipline of holiness. Differing in national feeling, in clime, in language, they ought to be one in Christ.

How then is this unity to be preserved? Let us turn again to the symbol:—what did the Seer behold? He did not behold one candlestick overtopping the rest, as if to oversee them; nor of larger dimensions than the rest, as if to contain for their supply the treasure of "the golden oil" (Zech. iii. 12). He saw seven candlesticks of the same altitude and the same dimensions; and their sevenfold light was one. And the reason of this appears; their Head was in the midst of them, walking up and down, trimming their lamps and pouring in the oil. This shews plainly that Christian unity is to be preserved, not by the precedence of one Church above another, as the

Romanist vainly dreams, but by the spiritual presence of Christ in the hearts of his believing people. Thus only can the lamps be trimmed, thus only can the light burn. And if this unity be broken up by the gentle Spirit of the Saviour being grieved and partially withdrawing Himself, as, alas! is now the case, it cannot be restored, save by that grieved Spirit returning. Precedence may produce *uniformity*, but that is only the mockery of *unity*. It is what a well-ordered army exhibits, hand joined to hand. But unity is a far deeper, a far more sacred thing. It is heart knitted to heart, and each beating in unison with its fellow. For there is in all, one spirit, and that, the spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. If we desire to see this blessing restored to the now divided Churches, we must ask for the accomplishment of the Saviour's own petition, "I IN THEM, and Thou in me" (John xvii. 23).

And this symbol should encourage us to prefer such a prayer. The Saviour is still where St. John saw Him, walking in the midst of the candlesticks, ready to trim our decaying lamps and to pour into our exhausted bowls His golden oil. Ephesus could not help Smyrna in days of old; nor Smyrna, Pergamos; nor Pergamos, Laodicea. And it is so still; no Church can help its fellow. There is one help for us all, in our exalted Head;

let us humble ourselves before Him and earnestly implore His grace. The glory of God, the welfare of His church, and our own everlasting interests, solemnly call on us to do so. That we may know then whose grace we shall implore, let us consider,

II. How He appeared to His servant. It was AS THE SON OF MAN, as THE SON OF GOD, as THE HIGH PRIEST AND HEAD OF HIS CHURCH, as THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, as THE SAVIOUR; also as THE MERCIFUL, THE ETERNAL, THE LIVING ONE; THE CONQUEROR OF HADES AND OF DEATH.

“One like unto the Son of Man.” We must not understand this word “like” to signify appearance as opposed to reality; its signification is just the opposite, reality as opposed to appearance. St. Paul puts this beyond a doubt. He who was “in the form of God,” he tells us, “and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took on Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. ii. 6, 7). And his evident intention in these words, is to set forth two realities, real God and real man. He tells us again that God hath sent “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,” *i. e.*, in flesh of its own nature sinful, the flesh of a sinful woman. And so when St. John on the memorable occasion before us, saw “one like unto the Son of Man,” it was a real

man he saw, that Man of Nazareth, that Jesus on whose bosom he had lain.

How much depends on this precious truth ! If the Saviour be a real man, we have One now to look to, who can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, because He was in all points tempted like as we are. He is moreover our example in the path of faith and hope, and our pattern of holy obedience. Obedience is the expression of subjection, and subjection belongs to man. Faith and hope imply weakness and dependence ; and both weakness and dependence are essential to the human condition. And when in our earthly troubles and perplexities we turn our eyes to Him, He remembers on our behalf, His own hour of trouble and deep necessity, His own time of perplexity and sorrow even unto death. But how shall this be, when He did not take our sin ? Because sin is not *the essence*, it is only *the accident* of humanity. He took all that was essential to man, and made Himself one with us. He did so, to save us from sin, and make us one with Him.

He is able thus to save us, because He is more than man ; " His head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow." These words announce the Son of God. We find them elsewhere as the symbols of Deity. " I beheld," says Daniel, " till

the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool" (vii. 9). They are its natural symbols. The head sets forth dominion; the hair sets forth strength; a snow-white head and hair is the accompaniment of venerable age. What then can express more suitably than such a symbol, the dominion, majesty, and power of Him who is from everlasting? Besides, as has been beautifully said, "whiteness is the appearance of unbroken light, ere yet it has passed through any medium, or been reflected from any object." The whiteness of wool or of snow, is therefore the symbol of pure Deity, of that God who "is light" (1 John i. 5), and dwells in light inaccessible (1 Tim. vi. 16). And the Son of Man thus stood before His servant, as "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, being of one substance with the Father." This symbolical testimony to His divine dignity and glory, corresponds in the most striking manner, with His own emphatic declaration in the days of His humbled flesh. The Jews denied Him antiquity; "thou art not yet fifty years old," they said. But in the memorable words, "before Abraham was, I am," He asserted for Himself the antiquity of this vision—the antiquity of the Ancient of days (John viii. 58).

"When my heart is overwhelmed," is the prayer of the suffering Psalmist, "lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Ps. lxi. 2). And this is really what suffering humanity needs. One no higher than ourselves may weep with us, but mere sympathy is powerless to save. The Lord Jesus is that Rock; the Rock of Ages; in Him human sympathy is allied with Almighty power. He not only can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities; He can strengthen the infirm "with all might, by His Spirit, in the inner man" (Eph. iii. 16). His human sympathy warns Him of that need on our part which the arm of His divine power is never slack to supply. We cannot therefore be tempted above that we are able to bear. There may be fightings without and fears within, and we may be exercised with trials of every form and name. But the Rock of Ages is higher than them all; and having our footing firm on Him, we are above them all, "more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37). This is the combination of characters in Christ which His people have ever found so precious. And it was in this combination that He now stood revealed to His servant—the Man of Nazareth, the Son of God.

But official as well as personal character is ex-

pressed in the symbols before us. The gracious and glorious One whom they set forth, was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." These words announce the High Priest. The garment down to the foot, is in the original, one word, and that word (*ποδηρη*) signifies the High Priest's robe. The golden girdle is also what is called in the Book of Exodus (xxxix. 5) "the curious girdle of the ephod . . . of gold, blue and purple and scarlet, and fine twined linen." Now these garments pertained to that exalted minister who entered once a year into God's presence on Israel's behalf, and came forth from that presence, to bless them. And the symbol is thus designed to teach us that the Son of God and man has entered as our Mediator and Advocate into the presence of the Father, and will yet come forth to bless with endless life the people who have trusted in His name. The union in His person, of humanity and Godhead, is His fitness for this holy office. He knows our frame, for He took it, and is therefore able to intercede for us. And the Father hears Him always; He cannot intercede in vain. The title "Son of Man," the head and hairs like wool, the garment and the girdle are therefore most beautifully suited to each other. They remind us that

a Brother, yea an Almighty Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, is now appearing on our behalf on high.

A High Priest implies a sacrifice; the most solemn act of that Minister was to carry sacrificial blood into the holiest of all. The priestly robe on the person of the Lord Jesus, reminds us therefore that He is the Sacrifice for our sins, and that, as another Apostle has emphatically told us, "not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by His own blood, He has entered in once into the holy place" (Neh. ix. 11, 12). We may take also the words of the prophet, "righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins and faithfulness the girdle of His reins" (Isa. xi. 4), as an inspired exposition of the golden girdle before us. His faithful love will never disappoint our confidence. For that confidence reposes on His wondrous act of mercy, His offering of Himself for our sins.

But, besides the garment and the girdle, there were "in His right hand seven stars," "His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," and "His voice was as the sound of many waters." These symbols announce another relation to the Church; they declare Him as her living Head. The seven stars are interpreted by Himself to be "the angels of the Seven Churches" (ver. 20); and they and the Churches represent

beyond all question, the universal ministry of the universal Church of God. His holding these stars in His right hand, is designed to tell us that God hath made Him "Head over all things, to that Church which is His body" (Eph. i. 21, 22). The ministry who feed her with the bread of life, are raised up by His providence, sanctified by His Spirit, and chastened by His holy discipline. His grace teaches them to instruct the ignorant, to warn the unruly, to comfort the sorrowful, and to support the weak. And, because it is His word that comforts and supports, His word that instructs and warns, these ministers are called stars. The light of that word shines forth through them till the Sun of Righteousness shall rise to rule the eternal day. It shines forth in the Church, and through the Church it shines forth to the world. That Church, as we have said, is His body. Every perfect human body has a voice to make known the mind of the intelligent spirit that dwells in it; and feet with which it communicates with the earth, and moves itself to and fro. And both of these are accordingly found in the symbol. The voice "as the sound of many waters," tells most emphatically and beautifully, that the Church of God is found in many lands, that the mysteries of redeeming love are declared in many tongues, and that the voice of prayer and praise is now ascend-

ing to heaven in many of the languages spoken on this earth below. "The waters," says the revealing angel in another place, "are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (chap. xvii. 15). And the Seer tells us, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters . . . saying . . . let us be glad, and rejoice" (chap. xix. 6, 7). It was the voice of the redeemed which he heard. And, in expression of their gladness and joy, "they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy . . . thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (chap. v. 9). The kindreds, tongues and peoples then, are the "many waters" of the symbol. And it would seem from the Scripture just cited, that "many" expresses universality—that there shall be no nation or kindred on the earth which shall not yield some of its people to swell the number of the redeemed of God. This blessed work is now in progress as the Gospel makes its way through the world; the spiritual body is hasting to its completion, which the Father is preparing for the Son. And then in His spiritual, as once in His natural body, shall the Son do the will of the Father, and glorify His blessed name. But the progress meanwhile is painful, yea attended with the keenest suffering. His feet, as the Seer saw him,

were like brass burning in a furnace. Nothing can be more beautiful than such a symbol. It is evidently designed to set forth the persecutions, afflictions and troubles, which marked His progress through the earth. For the intelligent "Head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you" (1 Cor. xii. 21). It was in His people that the Son of God went forth through the nations, claiming for Himself their homage, obedience and love. It is by the feet also that man communicates with the earth. And so, it was by His people that the Head of the Church in glory, maintained His connexion with the earth below, and preserved in it a witness for His name. This also occasioned suffering and affliction, even unto death. But whether encountered in the furtherance or in the maintenance of His Gospel, these sufferings were His furnace, the true Refiner's fire, to purge His people's dross. It has been beautifully said, that if you cast the finest brass into the fire, it will come forth so pure, as never again to take on rust from any exposure to the weather. Feet made of such a material would pass through the mire, through the clay, and through every kind of filthiness, and casting it off on the right hand and on the left, would remain themselves untarnished. And such were the feet which the Seer saw—Christ's people in the fires,

the cleansing fires of tribulation, holy in the midst of impurity, true in the midst of falsehood, alive to God in the midst of a world dead in sin. St. Paul tells us this without a symbol. "We are troubled," he says, "on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." And after thus telling us of the furnace, he declares its holy design, "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. iv. 7—11).

He who is thus preserving a holy people in the midst of an apostate world, will yet appear as the Omniscient and Righteous Judge of all men. This also is declared in these symbols. "His eyes," says the Seer, "were as a flame of fire," "and out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword." The eyes of fire denote plainly the Omniscience of Deity. The Lord Himself has thus interpreted the symbol. "These things, saith the Son of God," He tells us, "who hath His eyes like a flame of fire . . . all the Churches shall know that I am He who searcheth the reins and hearts" (chap. ii. 18—23). It is by the exercise of this Omniscience that He "shall bring every work into judgment and every secret thing" (Eccles. xii. 14). For He "shall judge the secrets of men" (Rom. ii. 16),

bringing to light "the hidden things of darkness," and making "manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5). In vain therefore do the wicked strive to conceal their wickedness; "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known" (Matt. x. 26). And He whose eyes of fire are thus able to search out iniquity, has an arm of power to smite it. Yea, He needs not an *arm* of power; His word is sufficient to slay. This is marked in the symbol, and with terrible emphasis. The sharp, two-edged sword was not in His hand, but in His mouth. He needs not to speak, and then to smite, to sentence, and then to execute His sentence. He speaks, and His enemies die; His word executes itself in their destruction. "Ananias," said the apostle Peter, "why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" And the miserable man, hearing these words, "fell down and gave up the ghost" (Acts v. 3—5). If God's Word in the mouth of a man of like passions as we are, was thus omnipotent to slay, what shall it be when proceeding from the lips of God Himself? It shall pass through the miserable like a sword, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow," inflicting conscious death (Heb. iv. 12).

How solemn is the warning which these con-

siderations suggest ! Let us not say that the eyes of fire and the sharp sword are for the world only, and that because we are in the Church we are safe. The Revealer Himself has applied these symbols to the Church. His message to Pergamos is from Him "that hath the sharp sword;" His threatening to her impenitent members, is to "fight against them with the sword of His mouth" (chap. ii. 12—16). He addresses Thyatira as "the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire;" He warns her impenitent children that He searcheth the reins and the heart (ver. 18—23). We may be nominally of the Church, but really of the world, as was that miserable man to whom reference has just been made. And if we are so, our experience shall resemble his. The Revealer's eyes of fire shall search out and expose our hypocrisy; the sword of His mouth shall slay us in the day of His anger.

But if these things be so—if He with whom we have to do, thus searches out and slays the transgressor, how shall we stand before Him? For we are all chargeable with innumerable transgressions and shortcomings, and cannot answer for one of a thousand. There may be transgression, there may be shortcoming; nay, there assuredly will be, till we are done with this body of sin. But these may be all the while our burden and our grief,

while our heart is true, and our confidence is in the Lord alone. Another portion of the symbol then comes in to comfort us; "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." These words denote doubtless the majesty of the Ancient of Days, but not majesty alone. "The light is sweet," it illuminates, cheers and comforts; "and it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun," from Him that light proceeds. The sun in his strength, pouring forth the light in which all animated beings rejoice, is therefore the fit emblem of God the Saviour. And it is by knowing Him in this blessed character that we are able to stand before Him as the Judge.

When the sun arises, there is light where all was darkness before. And the countenance of Jesus in like manner, gives light where all was ignorance before. We see in that countenance the love of God revealed; He "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16). It is the revelation also of Divine, forgiving mercy; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). It reveals His Father as our Father, it declares His God to be our God. And as the light of the sun exhilarates and cheers the heart, the light of that better Sun, "the Sun of Righteousness," banishes the spirit of bondage, and fills with the spirit of

adoption. This is the "healing in his beams" of which the prophet speaks (Mal. iv. 2). These words were fulfilled at the first coming of the Saviour to those who with Simeon and Anna, waited "for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25). They are fulfilled still; He is the consolation to this hour of God's true Israel, the people who have beheld His glorious countenance, and believe in His blessed name. That consolation moreover shall carry us through the solemnities of judgment, the knowledge of the Saviour shall embolden us to meet the Judge. We have made His love our confidence, His mercy our reliance, His promises our stay. And the Judge is "faithful, and cannot deny Himself." He must own that love and mercy, for He Himself revealed them; He must acknowledge these promises, for His lips of truth uttered them. Those therefore who have trusted in them, cannot possibly be put to shame. The righteousness of God is their shield, and eternal hiding place.

When the glory of Christ burst thus suddenly and unexpectedly on his servant, he was overwhelmed with fear and fell at His feet as dead. We need not ask why he did so. It is when we see the glory of God that we discover also our own vileness and pollution. Thus it was with Job: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,"

he said ; " but now mine eye seeth Thee : wherefore I abhor myself " (chap. xlii. 5, 6). Thus it was with Isaiah. " Woe is me," he cried ; " I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and mine eyes have seen the King " (Isa. vi. 5). And thus it was now with St. John. As he stood before Him whose countenance was like the Sun, he discerned his own deformity in that uncreated light, and was afraid. He feared those eyes of fire, searching the intents of his heart ; he feared the two-edged sword in the mouth of the Ancient of Days. But " He laid His right hand upon me," continues the astonished man, " saying to me : fear not." We therefore thank God for his fear, and that that fear so utterly overwhelmed him. For Christ has thus made it the occasion of a further revelation of Himself, to assure His believing people that they need fear no more. He is indeed the Judge ; His eyes of fire search out iniquity, and the sentence of His lips is death. But He is also the Son of Man our Brother ; the Son of God our Saviour ; the High Priest who is gone above as our Advocate with the Father. And if our trust is in His name, we cannot possibly be put to confusion. " Abide in Me " is His word, " and I in you " (John xv. 4). When we abide in Him as the object of our confidence, He abides in us by the Holy Ghost. And we are joined to the

Lord as the wife is joined to her husband; yea, as the members are joined to the body. "Now no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it." And so will He nourish, so will He cherish us till we are brought to the full participation of His own eternal life (Eph. v. 29, 30). To the ungodly who reject Him, to the hypocrites who deal falsely with Him, He has a word of fear; to the people who humbly receive Him, His word is, "Fear not." The keepers at the sepulchre were left alone in their consternation, while the angel said to the women, "Fear not ye: . . . ye seek Jesus" (Matt. xxviii. 4, 5).

The reason why the apostle was not to fear, and why we should not fear now, is opened in the words that follow, which are also designed in explanation of the symbol which has gone before. He is "the first and the last," and "He that liveth;" i. e., the Son of God, the Ancient of Days, in whom is the life of Godhead. That life passed through death for our sakes, when as "the Son of Man" He bare our sins, for He "was dead." But death could not hold essential life; He is "therefore alive for evermore, Amen," our Advocate with the Father, and the Fountain of life to us. And while, as the righteous Judge, He has "the keys of Hades and of death" to detain the souls and bodies of His enemies till their day

of final doom, He holds these keys also as His people's everlasting friend. He shall call their spirits from the disembodied state, and their bodies from the grave: that soul and body reunited, may share His eternal joy. Why then should we fear? The holy apostle counsels us, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

And I cannot but observe in conclusion, that such words and such gracious assurances are peculiarly soothing at the commencement of this book of awful wonders. It contains the seven seals whose opening announces conquest and war, famine, and the devastations of the word; the prayer also of the martyrs for vengeance on the earth, and the terrible day of the wrath of the Lamb. But He who passes these things before our mental vision, says while He is doing so, *Fear not*. It contains the seven trumpets, and announces the woes that follow each successive blast. The first sounds, and hail and fire follow; the third part of the trees and all green grass is burnt up. The second sounds, and at the casting into the sea of a great mountain burning with fire, the third part of it becomes blood, while a third part of its living inhabitants, and a third part of the ships is destroyed. The third sounds, and the star wormwood falls upon the rivers and foun-

tains of waters ; the waters are made bitter, and many die of their bitterness. The fourth sounds, and the third part of the sun, moon and stars is smitten ; for a third part of the day the sun shines not ; for a third part of the night the moon and stars give forth no lustre. The fifth sounds, and the bottomless pit is opened, out of which locusts come forth upon the earth. The sixth sounds, and four terrible destroyers are loosed to slay the third part of men. And we are warned that when the seventh shall sound, the mystery of God shall be finished. But in the midst of these awful revelations the word of the blessed Revealer is still, *Fear not*. It contains the seven vials filled with the wrath of God. The first is poured upon the earth, causing a noisome and grievous sore to fall on them who worship the beast. The second is poured upon the sea, and the third upon the rivers and fountains ; both sea and rivers become blood. The fourth is poured upon the sun, and men are scorched with fire. The fifth is poured upon the seat of the beast ; his kingdom is filled with darkness, and men blaspheme God. The sixth is poured upon the great river Euphrates ; its water is dried up, and three unclean devils are forthwith sent out to deceive. The seventh is poured into the air ; and while there is a great earthquake, and hailstones of the weight of a

talent, a voice from the temple announces, "It is done." But the word of the gracious Revealer is still, *Fear not.*

Nor are these the only wonders which this awful Revelation brings before the mind. It tells of the enmity of the devil to the woman's seed, and how, being cast out of heaven, he comes down with great wrath upon the earth. It tells of the beast from the sea with the seven heads and ten horns, to whom that adversary gives his power, and his seat, and great authority. It tells of the lamb-like beast from the earth, with two horns like a lamb, but speaking like a dragon, and deceiving by the miracles which he has power to do. It tells of the ripening of the harvest and the vintage also, and the treading of the winepress of the wrath of God. It tells of the utter overthrow of Babylon; it tells of the destruction of the beast and the associated kings of the earth; it tells of the final misery of the impenitent, it tells also of the final glory of Jesus and His people. And when, overwhelmed by this revelation of wonders, we fall with the Seer at the Revealer's feet as dead, He raises us from the ground with the same word of blessed encouragement, saying to us, *Fear not.*

In this spirit of adoption then let us study this book of Revelation, and look for the accomplish-

ment of the wonders which it reveals. "The temple of God," it tells us elsewhere, "was opened in heaven." And in the midst of "the lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquakes, there was seen in His temple **THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT**" (chap. xi. 19). In that covenant let our hopes be anchored, entering "into that within the veil" (Heb. vi. 19). The earth may be removed, the mountains may be carried into the midst of the sea, the waters thereof may roar and be troubled, the mountains may shake with the swelling thereof." We see, alas, already the commencement of these things. Surely there is even now "upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear" (Luke xxi. 25, 26). Yea, rebuke, disaster and shame have come home to ourselves as a people; and these, if the mercy of God prevent not, may prove only the beginning of sorrows. But for all this, we need not fear; "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble" (Ps. xlv. 1—3). He who says to us, Fear not, is the Son of God, the Ancient of Days. He has also gone in for us into the presence of the Father, and our life is hid with him in God, beyond the reach of harm. Death itself which separates body and spirit cannot separate either from Him; He is able to

keep both against the coming day of glory, and in that day to reunite them for ever. How then should earthly trouble come for a moment between us and His eternal love! Only, while we believe, let us also watch and pray. To this the Revealer Himself counselled His first disciples, and His counsel is to us as to them. And in following that counsel, we shall "be accounted worthy to escape" the things that are coming on the earth, "and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi. 36).

LECTURE IV.

THE COMMISSION OF THE EXILED DISCIPLE.

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IN THE FIELDS.

REVELATION I. 19.

*“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things
which are ; and the things which shall be hereafter.*

THE subject of this evening's lecture, is “The Commission of the Exiled Disciple.” I would approach the consideration of it in prayerful dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and with the earnest desire to speak what may tend to the glory of God and to your spiritual edification. The subject naturally divides itself into three parts. I. The person to whom the Commission came. II. The Commission itself. III. The end for

which it was given. May the Spirit of God be present in the midst of us who are here assembled, as I proceed to speak of each of these points in order.

I. With reference to the person to whom the Commission came, there is less difficulty than in almost any other portion of Scripture in deciding as to the writer of the Book of Revelation. Frequently in the course of the Apocalypse the writer alludes to himself by name. Thus in the first verse of the first chapter, "The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto him to shew unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass, and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." In the fourth verse you read, "John to the Seven Churches which are in Asia." Again, in the ninth, "I John who also am your brother and companion in tribulation." Again, in the twenty-first chapter and the second verse, "And I John saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem," and in the twenty-second chapter and the eighth verse, "And I John saw these things and heard them."

Nor need there be any difficulty felt, as to the person who is intended. Clearly it must have been a man of eminent holiness to be selected for receiving so sublime a revelation, and conveying the message from Christ to the Churches. The

evangelist and apostle John was a man of this exalted holiness. He was "the beloved disciple:" he was admitted to even nearer fellowship with the Saviour during His ministry on earth, than the other apostles. The opening of the message is in a style which denotes superiority in office. The writer invokes a benediction on the Churches similar in form to that which the apostles usually adopted in writing to Churches which they had planted,—“John to the Seven Churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you and peace from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the Seven Spirits which are before the throne.” In a subsequent part of the book, the writer is addressed by the angel as equal with the prophets. “I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren the prophets.” There is a remarkable similarity in many points between the Book of Revelation and the Gospel which is known to have been written by the Apostle St. John. The testimony in each book is emphatically of “THE WORD:” and forms of expression which are peculiar to St. John, as distinguished from the other three evangelists, occur repeatedly in the Book of Revelation. Hence it appears evident that the person to whom the Commission came, was the Evangelist and Apostle St. John.

It is important next to observe the time when

the Commission was given, and the circumstances of the apostle when he received it; upon this point we are told by the writer himself in the ninth verse, "I John who also am your brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ was in the Isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Though an Apostle he wrote to the Churches as a brother. He did not boast the dignity of his office but he acted in the spirit of the saying, "One is your Master Christ, and all ye are brethren." He calls himself their companion in tribulation. It was a time of open persecution. The Churches were harrassed by the cruel enmity of the Roman Emperor; and as was ever the case in primitive times, the higher the office, the greater was the exposure to peril; the Apostle was a mark for the persecutor's fury; he was made to drink more deeply than others of the cup of affliction. For his zeal in bearing testimony to Jesus, he was driven into exile, "I was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

He refers but briefly to his own sufferings: he simply records the fact that he was an exile for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Yet he was undergoing at this time a heavy trial;

He was banished by the Emperor Domitian probably about the year 96. He was therefore far advanced towards old age. There is also reason to believe that he was not simply in banishment, but immured in a dungeon, or compelled to toil as a slave. What tribulation for the aged apostle to endure! Arrested in the labour which he loved, of proclaiming the testimony of Jesus—torn from the Churches over which he presided—driven by the blast of persecution into exile and there condemned to pine in a dungeon or to work in chains! Surely this must have been an affliction of more than common severity even in those *days of tribulation*. On the other hand, who does not admire the way in which he rose above it, simply glancing at his suffering in the words, “I was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Thus it ever will be in the experience of the children of God. The faith which enables its possessor to see Him who is invisible, enables also patiently to endure. Earthly tribulation is comparatively lost sight of in the vision which faith discloses of heavenly glory: nay, even more than this; afflictions sustained for Christ’s sake are an occasion of triumph. The earliest sufferers in the cause of the Redeemer rejoiced that they were counted

worthy to suffer shame for His name. The Apostle Paul took pleasure in reproaches and necessities which befell him in his Master's work; St. James told his converts to count it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. The Apostle Peter who was himself a partaker of the sufferings, declares, "happy are ye if ye suffer for righteousness sake." Martyrs, as we all know, have sung hymns of praise amid the flames which consumed the body but wafted the soul to glory. So firm was the evangelist's faith in the coming blessedness; so bright his hope of the speedy revelation of Christ, and so ardent his love to the Saviour for whom he suffered, that although in bitter tribulation, he soared in thought beyond it all; the exile, imprisonment, or slavery of Patmos, was forgotten in the prospect which was present to the eye of faith of the inheritance awaiting him in the Saviour's kingdom.

I can well imagine the interest with which the disciple in exile would dwell upon the past history, (of which he knew much,) and the future prospects, (of which he desired to know more,) of the Church of Christ. More than sixty years had passed since, as one of the eleven, on the Mount of Olives he watched the departure of his ascending Lord. With eager gaze he looked wistfully up into heaven,

following, as far as the eye could reach, the Redeemer, on His upward way to His priestly throne : then it was that angel tongues* proclaimed the blessed promise, "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Ever since this promise had been a ray of hope, and a spring of action. Amid trial and reproach, and persecution and toil, it had served to comfort and sustain. The assured prospect of the return of Jesus had made him strong to endure ; nor could this blessed hope cease to animate the disciple even though in exile. The promise had often demanded the exercise of a strong faith. The expectation which it kindled at the first of a very speedy return, had been signally disappointed. John was the last surviving apostle. One after another, Peter, and Matthew, and Thomas, and Andrew, and Philip, and James, and the other apostles had glorified God by their deaths. They wrestled in the cause of Christ while they lived, and at length gained the martyr's imperishable crown. Even Paul, the intrepid and self-denying apostle—at one time the persecutor, but afterwards the preacher of the faith which once he destroyed—had been driven by the sword of Nero from the scene of earthly toil to join the ranks of the Church triumphant. Of those who companied together all the time that the Lord Jesus went in

and out amongst men, and who were the chosen witnesses of his resurrection, John was the only survivor—the last link of the band of apostles to whom the commission was first given, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”

What scenes would memory bring before him during his exile in Patmos! The loving words of Jesus—the sermons, the miracles, which he had heard or witnessed from Christ Himself—the bright manifestations of more than human excellence and wisdom which shone forth in the daily life of Christ—the many things which Jesus did—“the which, if they should be written, every one of them,” this same apostle had said, “I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” He would call to mind many an occasion when, with unearthly majesty, Jesus unfolded the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; or, in a tone of lofty indignation, rebuked the self-righteousness, the impenitence and hardness of heart, of the disbelieving Jews—many a scene when Christ gathered multitudes around Him by the performance of wonderful works—when He fed hungry thousands in the desert by His creative word, or by the same voice of power stilled the raging storm, expelled the demon or raised the dead.

Nor would he forget the scene when on Tabor's height he beheld the glories of the second advent foreshadowed in the Saviour's transfiguration ; or the yet more memorable scene in the garden, when the angel from heaven strengthened the suffering Redeemer, as, in the bitterness of His unknown agony, He three times prayed, " Father, if thou be willing, let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless not my will but thine be done." He would call to mind the fearful spectacle of the crucifixion,—the darkness—the earthquake—signs of nature's sympathy in her Creator's woe,—the meeting with Jesus after His glorious resurrection—the forty days of blessed converse ere the heavens received him. Then too what scenes would pass before his mind's eye connected with the advent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost—the startling events which followed, when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance ;" Peter's sermon, and the conversion which followed of three thousand souls, the first fruits of the harvest to be gathered under the Spirit's dispensation.

Memory would call to mind the invincible unbelief of the Jewish people—the token of their judicial blindness, which rapidly led to their national overthrow. The evangelist had lived to witness the portentous signs which preceded the deso-

lation of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of her children. He had beheld the accomplishment of our Lord's words, when from one of the surrounding hills He overlooked Jerusalem, and with tears foretold, "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." He had beheld the passing away of privilege from the chosen race of Israel, and the admission of the Gentiles to the favoured position once held by the descendants of Abraham. Already he had beheld the grain of mustard seed, to which Christ compared his kingdom on earth, grow into a great tree with wide spreading branches. Christianity had struck its roots deeply, and extended them far and near. There was not a part of the Roman world to which the Gospel had not come. Well nigh thirty years had passed since Paul wrote to the Colossians, "The gospel is come unto you, as it is in all the world." From the heights of Patmos he could discern in the distance the shores of Asia fringed with churches of Christ—Smyrna—Ephesus—Pergamos: in many a city beside, the name of Christ was loved and adored: there were churches in

Antioch, Galatia, Cyprus, Macedonia, Philippi, and Corinth. Athens had heard of the resurrection of Christ from the lips of an apostle: there was a Church in Rome which Paul had founded and nurtured with tears and blood. St. John had outlived the persecutions of Nero, and seen the cause of Christianity rather advanced than impeded by Jewish infidelity and pagan opposition.

At the same time it must have been with mournful feelings he dwelt upon the existence of a worse adversary to the faith than any Nero, or Domitian. This was heresy within the Church itself. Paul had spoken of the fearful apostacy—the elements of which were at work even in his day, and but a short time before he was banished to Patmos, John himself had written that, “many false prophets were gone out into the world,” that already there were many deceivers and “many Antichrists.” The name he best loved was dishonoured; the cause for which he had lived and was ready to die was assailed by dangerous error. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that as the evangelist dwelt on the past, or the then present state of the Church of Christ, he must have longed with more fervent desire, and been impelled to more importunate prayer for the promised consummation, that blessed hope, even the appearing in glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Such then were the circumstances under which the evangelist was placed when he received the commission. It may have been whilst deeply musing on the past history or the prospects of the Church of Christ, or possibly after an interval of earnest supplication, when, like Daniel of old, his soul was in some measure prepared by communion with God, to receive divine revelations—that suddenly the exiled disciple was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord from the earthly scene and at the same moment he heard a great voice behind him as of a trumpet.

His own account is, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.” It has been considered by some that the meaning of the expression, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day,” is that the evangelist was transported by the Spirit into the great day of the Lord: so that what he afterwards beheld, must be understood as exclusively relating to events connected with the day of the Lord’s advent. But the more closely that interpretation is examined the less tenable does it appear. I believe that “the Lord’s day” here spoken of, means the Christian Sabbath; so called emphatically because of the event which it specially commemorates, the resurrection of our Lord from the

dead. What the evangelist beheld, and afterwards relates, was unfolded to him by Divine Inspiration; he *was in the Spirit*; i. e., he was made to partake of a peculiar influence of the Holy Ghost; and by His help was enabled to behold and afterwards to record what is contained in this book.

II. I come now to the second part of the subject before us, namely, the commission itself which the exiled disciple received.

Now, that commission is briefly expressed in the eleventh, and again in the nineteenth verses.

Verse 11. "What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the Seven Churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea."

Verse 19. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."

The commission then was, to write in a book and transmit the record to the Seven Churches in Asia—

- (1.) The things which he had seen.
- (2.) The things which then were; and
- (3.) The things which should be hereafter.

(1.) The Evangelist was to write, first of all, the things which he had seen. Now what were these? From his own account you learn, that being turned

in the direction from whence the voice proceeded, he beheld seven golden candlesticks surrounding one like unto the Son of Man, who was clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; and He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

It is needless for me to dwell upon the description which is here given of the appearance of the Revealer. "The Vision of the Revealer" having been selected for distinct consideration in the present course of Lectures, it does not fall to my province to enter upon that part of the vision which John was commissioned to relate.

I only observe, in passing, that undoubtedly He who is here spoken of as like the Son of Man, was the Redeemer Himself. The symbols which are employed to describe His appearance, convey the idea of the human nature united with the Divine, and also convey the idea of the priestly office investing the person of the revealer.

Passing on to what more expressly belongs to

the subject before us this evening, I observe that the evangelist beheld seven golden candlesticks, and seven stars in the hand of Him who was like to the Son of Man. The interpretation of this part of the vision is given in the last verse of the chapter: "The seven stars are the angels of the Seven Churches, and the seven candlesticks are the Seven Churches."

Now, it is important to notice, that this inspired interpretation of the symbols here employed may guide to the interpretation of other symbols which are used in the course of the Revelation. The scene before the evangelist is evidently borrowed from the Jewish temple, or tabernacle. The seven candlesticks remind of the seven golden lamps of the ancient tabernacle, and the appearance of the Revealer cannot fail to remind of the ancient high priest attired in the robes of office.

From the Spirit's application of these Jewish symbols, to the realities of the Christian dispensation, we are prepared for the similar adaptation of similar symbols, borrowed from the same source, in the future visions of the Apocalypse.

The metaphor of a candlestick will signify throughout a Church; while the imagery of stars will import rulers generally, whether ecclesiastical or civil. Now, in the whole of this scenic representation, Christ appears, and Christ alone, in the

character of a priest. The fact of his walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, or Churches, denotes the priestly relation which he bears towards them all. I gather from hence the fundamental truth, that there is no priest under the Christian dispensation, save the Lord Jesus Christ. The Aaronic priesthood was but typical, and therefore temporary. It has merged in the priesthood of Christ, who is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The office even of apostles had nothing in it of a priestly character; nor has the office of the Christian ministry. The ministers of Christ are called by a variety of titles. They are compared to watchmen, to stewards, to labourers, to builders, to ambassadors, to husbandmen; but they are never spoken of in Scripture by any title which denotes sacerdotal office. Even the presiding rulers of the Churches are here called "angels," as they are elsewhere called "overseers," both titles expressing subordination to some higher authority: the title of angel, or messenger, beautifully harmonizes with the grand design of the Christian ministry, which is not to approach God in behalf of man, (which would be a priestly act,) but to approach man with a message in behalf of God.

The Seven Churches were represented by seven golden candlesticks. Why *seven* rather than one? Seven is a number commonly taken to denote per-

fection. Various are the gifts and the graces which proceed from one and the same Spirit. The Church of Christ, on earth, is composed of many branches, distinct in some respects from each other, yet pervaded by one Spirit, and united to one Head. The emblem of a candlestick conveys the idea of the grand mission of the Church of Christ to enlighten the world; to exhibit in the midst of this morally darkened earth, the glory of Him who is come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Him should not walk in darkness, but should have the light of life. What the Church was intended to be in its collective capacity, each disciple of Christ ought, as a separate member of that Church to be, shining in the sphere in which God's providence has placed him, with the reflected image of the Saviour, and shewing forth the praises of Him by whom he has been called out of darkness unto marvellous light.

Christ is represented as holding the stars in His right hand. The idea conveyed is that of presiding authority; it denotes the real, though unseen interposition of Christ in the government of His Church upon earth. Men are often apt to lose sight of the truth that nothing can occur apart from the appointment, or permission, of the Lord Christ. But He is Head over all things to the Church, so that however for the purposes of

judicial correction, or for the manifestation of truth, which is always brighter by reason of conflict with error, or for the trial and discipline of His people, He may permit apparent evil to arise, yet He cannot relinquish His control, or lay aside His authority: herein there is ground of hope, even in periods of the darkest gloom or thickest peril. The Redeemer walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holds the seven stars in His right hand.

(2.) The second part of the commission given to the exiled disciple relates to the things which then were. "Write," said the revealer to him, "the things which thou hast seen, and *the things which are.*" I believe that this part of the commission relates to the then existing state of things in the Seven Churches, to which the record was originally sent. The view of the Revelation taken by some, is, that the seven epistles which are contained in the second and third chapters, do not describe the state of things which then existed, but delineate, separate conditions, which were to be successively developed in the future progress of the Church. This interpretation appears to me out of harmony with the context; uncalled for by the circumstances of the case; and opposed to the cardinal rule for interpreting Scripture, that "Where a literal construction will stand, the

farthest from the letter is commonly the worst.”* The commission clearly relates to three distinct points. “The things seen; the things that are; and things to be hereafter.” The things seen are defined in the first chapter. “The things that are,” are as clearly defined in the second and third chapters. Then comes a marked transition—a different scene; and a fresh summons, “Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must be hereafter.” The message relating to the “things that are,” is contained in seven letters addressed to the presiding rulers over Seven Churches then existing. There is nothing in the letters themselves which denotes a design on the part of Christ to describe a state of things which did not then exist. If these several letters be supposed to describe successive states of the Church up to the time of the end, it is strange that the last stage—as described in the epistle to Laodicea—is the most corrupt. For these, and other reasons, I believe that the second and third chapters of this book, faithfully describe what then existed in the several Churches specified; at the same time, I readily admit that other Churches in all ages may furnish a counterpart to what is here described, so that the warnings or admonitions contained in these

* Hooker, *Ecc. Pol.*

several letters may be as applicable now as they were when at the first delivered.

With the single exception of Laodicea, every Church which is addressed in these several epistles presented the appearance of mingled good and evil. This is generally characteristic of all Churches. In every Church there will probably be some who have *left their first love*, like the Ephesians ; many *who are tried*, like the Christians in Smyrna ; some who have need to be warned, like those in Thyatira ; some to be admonished, like those in Sardis, "*to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which remain that are ready to perish ;*" or even some to be rebuked, like the Laodiceans, for their lukewarm profession and fatal self-esteem.

Each message has distinct features of its own, but there are points of agreement common to them all. Thus, in each case the message, though intended for the members of the Church collectively, was addressed to the presiding angel, or ruler. In each case, though transmitted by the disciple, it was dictated in the words of Christ. Each message opens with the emphatic words : "*I know thy works,*" denoting the observant eye with which the Churches are regarded by the Redeemer. In each case (Laodicea only excepted where there was no redeeming feature in her lukewarm professors); our Lord first selects a point for

commendation. Each message contains a call to give ear; and each concludes with a promise, not made to the Church collectively, but specifically addressed to "*Him that overcometh.*"

Throughout these several letters, you find abundant evidence of the Redeemer's watchful superintendence; of the searching look with which He continually beholds every branch of His professing Church; you find evidence of His tender love and deep compassion; of jealousy for His own honour and the purity of His mystical body; promise is blended with threatening; encouragement with admonition; you meet with offers of richest blessing, amid allusions to fearful woe; earnest entreaty to watchfulness, fidelity, perseverance; topics of comfort for the tried; support for the tempted; and all these varied helps to holiness, or dissuasives from evil, enforced by the repeated call, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

(3.) The Commission given to the exiled disciple, relates in the third place to the things which were to be hereafter; *i. e.*, to the future history of the Church of Christ up to the end of all things—the advent of our Lord, and the state of eternal blessedness which will succeed the close of the present dispensation. This portion of the commission opens with the fourth chapter, and is

continued up to the close of the Book. It differs in many remarkable features from what has gone before. The scenery is changed. The evangelist is again appealed to by the voice as of a trumpet, which said, "Come up hither, and I will shew thee the things which must be hereafter."

He no longer beheld the seven golden candlesticks nor the seven stars in the hand of the Redeemer; but in place of this, he beheld a throne set in heaven, and occupied by a being of glorious Majesty. The throne was encircled by a rainbow, the emblem of the covenant of grace: before it was a sea of glass; and seven lamps of fire representing the seven spirits, or the sevenfold graces of the Spirit of God. Round about the throne were seated in white raiment with crowns of gold four-and-twenty elders, and in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. These together with the elders, are represented as uniting in the unceasing act of adoration and praise, to Him that sat on the throne who liveth for ever and ever. The four-and-twenty elders and the four beasts are described as joining to swell the anthem, as they fell before the Lamb, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation," words which make it evident that these

are to be regarded as representatives of the Church of the First-born, gathered from amongst men. Nor was this the whole of that august assembly; angels whose number was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, stood around the throne and joined with loud voice in the exulting song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing." Such was the glorious scene unfolded to the exiled disciple's rapturous gaze. Then we read of a book sealed with seven seals whom none but the Lion of the tribe of Juda could prevail to open and to loose the seven seals thereof. In the sixth chapter you have the opening of the several seals down to the sixth; the successive seals delineating the power and gradual decline of heathen Rome up to the period when under Constantine, paganism finally gave place to the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Empire. Then follows in the seventh chapter the description of a period of rest and peace and the gathering of God's elect, represented, by the sealed ones, an hundred and forty and four thousand out of all the tribes of the children of Israel. The seventh seal opens, and seven angels appear, to whom were given seven trumpets. One trumpet after another sounds, and woes each

succeeding one more terrible than the former are poured on the earth.

These successive woes denote the judgments which fell on Christian Rome, by reason of its departure from the pure faith of the Gospel. The sounding of the sixth trumpet seems to be connected with events which attended the ushering in of the Reformation. Then follow a variety of delineations partly symbolical and partly literal which describe the future history of the Church of Christ—the persecution of the saints—the rise and development of heresies—successive judgments on Christendom represented by the outpouring of the seven vials of the wrath of God on the earth, till finally, under the outpouring of the seventh vial, you find the doom of the great apostacy described under the mystic name of “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.”

The shout is heard—“Babylon the Great is fallen is fallen,” and then follows the description of the first resurrection—of the millennial glory and finally of the descent of the New Jerusalem and the consummation of all things when “the tabernacle of God shall be with men and He will dwell with them and they shall be His people and God himself shall be with them and be their God.”

III. And now let me dwell for a few moments on the design of the whole commission thus given to the exiled disciple. Can you doubt that it was given for the instruction, the guidance, the comfort of the Church in every subsequent age? I need not enlarge upon the emphatic blessing which is more than once pronounced upon those who read and who keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book; the Revelation both commences and concludes with the promise of blessing upon those who study this portion of God's Word. True indeed, it contains mysteries which cannot be fully explained by the most prayerful or diligent student; but these very difficulties are subservient to spiritual blessing; they tend to humble reason, to beget a meek and reverential disposition in the study of the sacred word; above all they keep alive the sense of our absolute dependence upon the teaching of Him who inspired and can alone infallibly interpret the language of Scripture.

At the same time, while there are depths of divine wisdom contained in this book which no created intellect can fathom, there are treasures of spiritual teaching which very babes in Christ may comprehend and embrace. Every one may learn from the Book of Revelation the great lesson that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that events which occur upon this lower scene are all in His

hand, and at His control: the earthquake, the tempest, the famine, the pestilence, the scourge of war and the ravage of disease; all these are instrumentalities for accomplishing the immutable purposes of Him who ruleth over all from the beginning.

It is no light privilege for the Christian to be able by the help of the written word to trace the origin of events which perplex the wisest and most gifted of men, to the sovereign purpose of that unchangeable One who ruleth in the armies of heaven and doeth upon earth according to His will; known unto God are all things from the beginning; The rise of one empire or the downfall of another, the breaking forth of persecution, or the cessation of its fury; the conflicts of truth and the apparent triumph of error, all these are parts of a comprehensive scheme ordered by the finger of Providence and subject to the appointment or permission of infinite wisdom. Nor does the lesson end here. The whole of this sublime revelation unfolds the truth of the unslumbering vigilance with which God constantly beholds what passes on earth; Up to His throne in the heavens, continually ascends the memorial of the sins that challenge wrath; the opposition of the adversaries to His truth; the violation of His holy law; the scoff of the infidel; these provocations though

often apparently offered with impunity, are unerringly registered; and to each hardened and impenitent sinner who continues inflexibly disobedient, at length the time comes, when being ripe for judgment, the sentence of guiltiness is no longer withheld. Again and again is this lesson enforced in the course of this wonderful revelation; nor is it only that God marks with the view to punish the disobedience of the ungodly: there is an unbroken intercourse between earth and heaven, which is maintained on behalf of the redeemed.

The exiled disciple in Patmos was not more an object of the Redeemer's compassion and regard, than is every faithful believer; amid all the changes of his earthly pilgrimage, not a sigh can escape a child of God, but it is known in heaven; not a tear can be wept over surrounding, or even indwelling corruption, but it is registered in God's book of remembrance. Nor are such sighs or tears in vain; the cry of the martyrs did not reach in vain the ears of the High Priest on His throne. For the cruel oppression of the saints of Jesus, great Babylon was had in remembrance, and was made to drink of the wine cup of the wrath of God. Surely these are not unimportant ends to have been answered by the commission which the exiled disciple received. Periods of affliction and trial to His Church awaken the tenderest sympathies of

Christ. The dying Stephen was privileged to behold in the midst of his suffering, the scene of glory upon which the emancipated spirit was just about to enter : the prayers of the afflicted Church in Jerusalem, when Peter was in prison, and exposed to death, rose up with acceptance, and an angel was commissioned to descend and loosen the apostle's chains, and open the prison doors. To the exile in Patmos, such visions were imparted of heavenly glory as made him forget his earthly tribulation : standing at a remote period of time, he is permitted to look down the vista of futurity, to behold the struggles—the conflicts—the trials ; the triumph of the Church of the Redeemer—her oppression at one time, and her deliverance at another ; he beheld her at one time subject to bitter persecution ; at another, well nigh submerged beneath the waves of heresy and false doctrine ; but, after all, he beheld the true Church of the firstborn surviving opposition, whether from without or within ; a silver line of faithful disciples reaching onward in unbroken succession to the future coming of the Redeemer : that Church will never never perish ; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it ; nothing can harm, nothing can destroy it ; like a gallant vessel, she shall hold on her way, defiant alike of the blast and the billow, riding securely, and triumphantly onward to the haven of eternal rest.

With what deep and earnest self-examination ought each professing Christian to ask,—Am I indeed a member of the Church of the first-born? Am I united by a true and living faith to the Redeemer? Have I been made to partake of His spirit? Am I walking in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus? The visible Church of Christ is a mingled body. The tares grow along with the wheat. There is no power in men to discern in all cases between the sincere and the hypocrite. Both may join in the same religious exercise; both may bend in the same act of supplication or praise; both may hearken to the same message; be familiar with the Gospel, and even prize the ministry of it; both may partake of the same ordinance, and yet the one be a child of perdition, and the other an heir of glory. By all that is most precious to you as born for immortality; by all that is most glorious in the future; most blessed in heaven; or wretched in hell; I pray you not to deceive yourselves. Confound not membership with the Church, with membership with Christ. Better, far better never to have heard of His saving name, than not to have become acquainted with His saving power; better never to have known of the Spirit of grace, than to live beneath the sound of the Gospel unrenewed, unconverted, and unsanctified.

On the other hand, let the true followers of the

Lamb be encouraged and quickened to persevere in the heavenly race; time is rapidly fleeting; the purposes of God are fast hasting to their accomplishment; the signs are thickening which portend the consummation of all things; everything around us seems to say—Be diligent—be watchful—let your loins be girded, and your lamps burning, and ye yourselves like men that wait for the Lord; thus will you be prepared for His approach; and though the harbingers of that event should be signs of terror and dismay, pestilence, famine, war, tribulation, perplexity of nations, men's hearts failing them for fear of those things that are coming on the earth; yet, in the midst of it all, the blessed promise—"Surely I come quickly," shall shed its ray of light across the gloom. Yet a little while and you shall stand amongst the children of the first resurrection—share their bliss, and partake of their triumph.

LECTURE V.

PARADISE RESTORED AT CHRIST'S COMING.

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REVELATION II. 7.

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”

IN the Epistles to the Seven Churches which introduce this divine prophecy, the Great Captain of salvation marshals His armies for their conflict with the powers of evil, and sets before every faithful soldier of the cross the rewards of victory. The promise, in all of them, has the same address, to him that overcometh. They all point onward to the consummation at the close of the prophecy, when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His Bride hath made herself ready, and the children of

the resurrection enter into their glorious rest, and enjoy the home prepared for them in the New Jerusalem.

This first promise, to the angel of the Church at Ephesus, spans the whole course of Providence. It leads our thoughts backward to the Garden of Eden, and onward to a coming eternity. We have here a glimpse of that secret unity which prevails throughout the word of God, amidst the immense variety of facts and doctrines which it reveals. In the first dawn of the world's history, there was already a prophecy of the future hope of the Church; and all the elements which composed the beauty of the earthly Paradise were only figures, appointed by Him who sees the end from the beginning, of the better things to come. Our Lord, in these words, would raise our thoughts from the type to the anti-type; from Paradise lost by the first, to Paradise recovered by the last Adam; from the beauty and loveliness of the home provided for man unfallen in the Garden of Eden, to the nobler delights reserved for ransomed sinners, in that glorious and heavenly dwelling-place which awaits them in the coming day of their full redemption.

May the Great Head of the Church Himself, unfold to us the deep meaning of His own promise, and enable us by faith and hope, to antici-

pate those rich blessings which are treasured for His faithful servants. Let us inquire, first, what was the meaning and nature of the typical Paradise; secondly, the nature of the anti-type in the close of the prophecy, or the Paradise of the New Jerusalem; and finally, what is the blessing designed in these words, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

I. The history to which allusion is here made, is in these words, "And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went forth from Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became four heads. The name of the first is Pison; that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon; the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel; that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria; and the fourth river is Euphrates."

The early record, which introduces the whole course of Divine Providence, opens a boundless field of meditation. I can only here touch upon a few leading truths, which result directly from the words of the text, and a comparison with other statements of the Holy Spirit of God.

And first, the words of the sacred text imply a real fact, and not a mere allegory. This would be perfectly clear, if so many strange fancies had not been grafted, in later times, upon the simple narrative of Moses. In the boastful message of Sennacherib we have these words, "Have the gods of the nations delivered them whom my fathers have destroyed, Gozan and Haran and Rezeph, and the children of Eden in Telassar." Two of the four rivers, the Hiddekel or Tigris, and the Euphrates, are mentioned repeatedly in the Scriptures, and are familiarly known to the present day. It is also certain that a gold region lay near the head of the Persian Gulf, and the land of Cush, Chusistan or Susiana, was watered by the Ulai or Choaspes, which unites with the Tigris and Euphrates, near the ancient head of that gulf. The description would be useless, unless the places were still to be recognized where Moses wrote, and the rivers actually known. We may infer that the site of Paradise, the garden assigned to our first parents, was in the lower part of Mesopotamia,

between the Persian Gulf, and the site of Babylon, in a district which remained, for ages, one of the most fruitful on the face of the earth.

But while the description must be viewed as a real history, it is no less clear that deeper truths lie beneath the surface. For if the tabernacle in the wilderness was made after a pattern shewn on the mount, and served for an example and shadow of heavenly things, we may well believe that the same was true of the first dwelling of mankind, this garden which was planted by the hand of God. All the sources of happiness which the creature could supply, were here brought together in rich profusion. The garden was the choicest spot of a lovely and unfallen world. Every tree good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, was here to be seen, and all were bestowed upon Adam and Eve for their full and free enjoyment. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat." It was a large and gracious permission, that man might delight himself in all the works of his Creator's hand. It was a garden, and not a city, for human society was still only in its first infancy, and the fuller delights of a multiplied and enlarged society were still to come. But whatever the lower works of God could supply, that was precious, fair and beautiful, to exercise the faculties and gratify the senses of man, was freely and largely provided in

this well-watered and amply-furnished garden. It was the choicest flower of creation, the crown of beauty to the whole visible universe.

Two features are singled out for especial notice, on which the whole history depends. There was "the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." There is no reason to doubt that these were also real trees, but invested, by divine appointment, with a sacramental character, significant of deep truths of the spiritual world. The same law may really extend to the whole range of the vegetable creation, but it is plain that we are not competent, in our present state, to search out this vast variety of concealed parables, which may be reserved for our insight in the kingdom of God; when the corn, the olive, the vine and the fig-tree, may be found to have their separate lessons, and to denote celestial fruitage by which the spirits of the redeemed shall be nourished and refreshed for ever. But the meaning of these two trees is revealed, with tolerable clearness, in the sacred narrative. The tree of life was endued with the property of sustaining the natural life of Adam and Eve, so that by eating of it habitually they would be saved from the gradual wasting of the vital powers, and maintained in perpetual youth and vigour. On the other hand, the tree of knowledge was endued with the gift of

opening the eyes of those who tasted it, so as to discern a class of moral truths before hidden ; and the first truth which it revealed to Adam and Eve was the humbling fact of their own nakedness. The principles to which they severally appealed were humble, submissive faith in the promise on the one hand, and on the other, a vain, unreasonable curiosity, resolved to pry into mysteries, which God, for wise and generous reasons, had forborne to reveal. Our first parents made the unhappy choice of the tree of knowledge. Like so many of their children, they would search into deep things, too wonderful for them, instead of walking in the safe pathway of obedience to the Divine will, and believing that the prohibition was no selfish restriction on their happiness, but was good, wise and holy. The name of the tree proved to be truly given, but wrought very differently from what their own curiosity had surmised. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked," and before the Judge interfered to pronounce His sentence upon the crime, the fruits were shame, fear, and misery.

This first act of folly would have involved a second, still more fatal, if the Divine wisdom had not interfered. Man, though fallen, with his eyes opened, would have grasped at the natural immortality, which seemed still within his reach, and

partaking of the tree of life, would have only become immortal in sin and wretchedness. To hinder this fatal consequence of that half-wisdom, which is real folly, of this newly acquired enlargement of the human intellect, divorced from moral and spiritual uprightness, a new economy of severe and righteous discipline was required. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground, from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

II. The typical history closes with this solemn event, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the earthly Paradise. For long ages a mournful silence reigns, till the Holy Spirit, by the lips of the wisest of men, begins to decipher the hidden meaning of the history, and teaches us that the tree of life is still within the reach of sinners of mankind. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst

desire are not to be compared to her. . . . She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her, and happy is every one that retaineth her." And when He who is greater than Solomon, after a thousand years of further delay, had fulfilled all righteousness, and ascended up where He was before, the first message of the risen Saviour to the Churches, by which He would animate them to a faithful service, closes with this promise—"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

These words clearly refer, by anticipation, to the glorious vision which crowns and completes the long series of Divine messages. In the account of the New Jerusalem we have this striking passage—"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord

God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

The heavenly Paradise, here described, is plainly the anti-type of that beautiful Assyrian garden from which Adam and his wife were driven. It is the promised home of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and of the Bride, the Lamb's wife, where the saints shall be for ever with their Lord in the full enjoyment of the beatific vision. All the features of the description, whether by resemblance or by contrast, are designed to unfold the surpassing beauty and glory of this heavenly inheritance. The former Paradise was, after all, an earthly dwelling-place, not far from the later sites of Nineveh and Babylon, and shared largely in the curse which lighted upon the whole earth for Adam's transgression. But the New Jerusalem "cometh down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." No taint of sin or defilement can ever obscure the brightness of its glory. The earthly garden was watered by the four rivers of Paradise, as if to denote the confluence of all the happiness the creature can supply. But the bliss of the heavenly Paradise has a higher source, uncreated and eternal. It is watered by one stream, surpassing all the fountains earth can supply, "a pure river of water of life, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." The

treasures, which bordered one of the rivers of the first Paradise, were only in the mine, or the depth of the sea. The pearls and the onyx stone were to be secured only by laborious toil. But in the heavenly city they have all been brought forth from their hiding places in immense profusion; they are perfect in their beauty, and no toil is needed to secure and enjoy them; spiritual treasures, far surpassing all the gems of earth. "Each several gate was one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass; and the foundation garnished with all manner of precious stones." In the earthly garden the tree of knowledge of good and evil was planted hard by the tree of life, and was the sad occasion of our parents' fall. But here the tree of life blooms for ever, and no tree of false and dangerous knowledge is planted by its side. Nay, more, the tree of life itself is multiplied, and becomes a fertile grove, bordering the river of life on either side with fruits ever varying in their richness and spiritual fragrance, of healing virtue, and pleasant taste. "On either side of the river is the tree of life, which bear twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." In the first Paradise, Adam, through sin, fled from the presence of his Maker. Here the children of God "shall see His face, and His

name shall be on their foreheads." There the blessing was transitory, and followed by a lasting curse ; and Paradise itself, and the whole creation around it, was made subject to vanity for six thousand years. But here "there shall be no more curse," but joy and blessedness without end. The pleasures of the earthly Paradise, even while they lasted, were the pleasures of infancy. It was a garden, and not a metropolis, nor a kingdom. Its dwellers had the innocence of childhood, not the deep experience of good in its triumph over evil, which is given to the Church of the first-born. They were naked, and knew it not. But the dwellers in the heavenly city are clad in glorious robes, the fine linen which is the righteousness of the saints, clothing of wrought gold, the perfected work of the sanctifying Spirit, and these robes are made white by the blood of the Lamb. Their home is a garden for pleasant delight, a country of vast extent, a city for all the fulness and variety of social love, in dignity a metropolis enthroned over a ransomed universe, and, above all, a Holy of holies, where the glory of the Divine Presence is completely unveiled. No temple is there seen, because it is itself a temple, or rather the Most Holy place in the spacious temple of the whole new creation of God ; and no veil separates its worshippers from the full vision of Him whom they adore.

III. Let us now enquire more directly, what is the meaning of our Lord's promise—To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God. One feature of blessed privilege, which belongs to the happy dwellers in the heavenly Jerusalem is here singled out from the rest, and takes the lead in this rich cluster of spiritual blessings. What is the true meaning of the promise, and how is it connected with the coming and the kingdom of our Redeemer?

And first, it is plain that spiritual, and not bodily food, is implied in this promise. It is the ransomed spirit which will then be satisfied with heavenly nourishment, for "man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God." That street of the city which is pure gold, as it were transparent glass, is no soil in which literal trees can be planted, nor could these furnish the true nourishment for the souls of the faithful. The Spirit of God has already provided a key to the meaning of the promise: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life," and it is heavenly wisdom which is "a tree of life to those that find her." Truth, heavenly truth, in all its variety, its sweetness and preciousness, is the real and lasting nourishment of the spirits of the redeemed in the kingdom of God. And hence

the Psalmist says, in allusion to the same figure—
“Truth shall flourish out of the earth, and righteousness hath looked down from heaven.”

But in these epistles we have another variety of the same general promise of spiritual nourishment. Our Lord says to the Church in Pergamos, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” What is the difference between these two promises? and what separate message of comfort and hope does each of them convey to the Church of God?

Now the manna came direct from heaven, and was the sole food of the people in the wilderness. It was light bread, resembling honey for sweetness, but ceased when they entered the promised land. It was a less full and solid form of nourishment, yet well able to sustain them in the wilderness, where the fruits of Canaan could not grow. I conceive, then, that the hidden manna denotes the goodness of God, as manifested simply in promise, before its fulfilment; while the tree of life denotes the goodness and perfection of God, as manifested in promises fulfilled, and counsels accomplished, and the actual course of his holy Providence.

The manna is the riches of Divine grace in promise; the tree of life, the same riches of Divine grace in actual manifestation. One of them comes

direct from heaven ; the other grows from a seed planted in the soil of time, and ripens with the unfolding course of Providence, till it yields a firm and sure supply of spiritual nourishment to all the holy creatures of God.

To eat of the tree of life is thus a figure to denote that high privilege of the redeemed spirit, by which it can read, in all the events of Providence, the unfolding of God's perfect wisdom, holiness, and love, and satisfy itself with ever-growing meditation on His unsearchable goodness. It is the same privilege which St. John describes in those who are most advanced in Christian experience—"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him who is from the beginning."

Viewed in this light, there is a close connexion between the promise, and the state of the Ephesian Church, to whom it was addressed. They were diligent in labours, but they had left their first love. Their service of their Lord, though outwardly zealous, was in danger of sinking into a mechanical drudgery. And hence the blessing proposed to them, as the object of holy ambition, is that which is most opposed to the temptation which assailed them, the eternal, adoring contemplation of the goodness of the Lord. It is only when we eat of the tree of life that we are able to render our Lord acceptable service. Without this Divine

food, our worship becomes a mockery, our services a lifeless form, an irksome task. The life of the soul decays, till we are nourished anew with this living bread, and raise our thoughts above the round of our own petty services, and passing engagements, to gaze upon the goodness and beauty of our God and Saviour, in all his works and ways from the beginning of time.

The tree of life "bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month." What truth is taught us in this feature of the prophecy? If the tree of life denotes the perfect goodness of Jehovah, manifested in all the acts of his all-wise Providence, the meaning will at once be plain. Every year, and every age, from the creation to the days of eternity, presents some new variety of Divine wisdom and love. There was love and wisdom in the days of Paradise. There was love and wisdom, in a new form, when Enoch was translated, and the Lord was grieved in his heart for the wickedness of mankind. There was love and wisdom, in new and varying forms, when a covenant of mercy was made with Noah for everlasting generations; when Abraham received the promise of a seed as numerous as the stars of heaven; when the trial of his faith, in the sacrifice of Isaac, became a lasting type of the sacrifice of the Son of God; when the law was given from Sinai; when the God of Israel

carried His people through the wilderness, as a nurse her children, or as the eagle stirreth up her young, and bears them on her wings ; when Joshua led the hosts of the Lord into the land of promise ; and when David was raised to the throne of Israel, and received an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. There were still new varieties of wisdom and holiness, of mercy and compassion, when Elijah was jealous for the God of Israel, and went in a fiery chariot to heaven ; when the hosts of Sennacherib were overthrown at the prayer of Hezekiah ; when Israel and Judah were led captive, and restored from captivity, and the light of prophecy was slowly withdrawn, to give a double glory to the dawning of the Sun of Righteousness. The times of the Gospel, from the birth of our Lord down to the present day, are stored with still nobler wonders of Divine wisdom and love. To know these, in their variety of holy wisdom, their depths of forbearance and compassion, the breadth and length, and depth and height, of that love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and which is revealing itself from age to age, in new forms of grace, patience and long-suffering towards the rebellious children of men ; to see everywhere the superabounding of grace above the abounding of sin, the triumph of forbearance over perverseness, of inflexible righteousness over the stubbornness of

sin, of recovering mercy over aggravated wickedness, and all in perfect harmony, unfolding itself more and more from age to age ; and, as new forms of evil arise, overcoming them still with new forms of holy loving kindness—this is indeed to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

IV. Now, if such be the meaning of the promise, its fulfilment begins really in the present life. For grace is the seed of glory ; “and this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.” The great apostle had begun to taste largely the fruit of this tree of Paradise, when he said, in the fulness of his joyful experience, “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable to His death.” And St. John teaches the same lesson, that this heavenly gift is already begun—“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

But while the earnest of the blessing, even in

this present life, are exceedingly precious, the fulness is reserved for the coming of our Lord, and the time of His manifested kingdom. All the promises to the Seven Churches point us forward to that glorious day. Then the faithful shall be delivered from the fearful sentence of the second death. Then shall the saints of God be called by a new name, which the Lord himself shall name. Then shall power be given to them over the nations, and they shall be made sharers in the perfect victory of their Redeemer. They shall walk with their Saviour in white robes, having been made meet, by his cleansing blood and quickening Spirit, for the inheritance of the saints in light. They will then be pillars in the temple of God, and dwellers in the New Jerusalem, and will sit with their Lord upon His throne. And then, also, will they enjoy in its fulness the privilege, of which the earnest had been given them in their pilgrimage, to eat of the tree of life, which blooms in the midst of the Paradise of God. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but, then, face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as we are known."

Business, worldly pleasure, the conflicts of worldly policy, even human philosophy, in which God is forgotten, and His works alone are studied, cannot feed or satisfy the immortal spirit of man.

Even those glimpses and snatches of truth which the Christian can attain amidst the darkness of the present world, are not enough to quench the deep hunger and thirst of the soul. We need a higher and nobler portion; and that higher portion has been provided for every believer. It is the tree of life in the midst of the Paradise of God. It is the meditation, through eternal ages, on a scheme of love that has been unfolding from the birth-day of time, and that will display fresh beauties, and hidden depths of love and wisdom, through all the countless ages of the world to come. It is when the ransomed spirit, gazing on all the changing events of six thousand years, in which not even a sparrow hath fallen to the ground without our heavenly Father, and keenly alive to the awful reality of moral evil, can say, with clear discernment of the glorious truth, "Where sin hath abounded, there grace doth much more exceedingly abound," and apply to the whole range of Providence, the words once spoken in the view of our Saviour's miracles of mercy, "He hath done all things well." It is to see Divine love, full, deep, holy, eternal love, beaming down from every star, reflected from every dew-drop, revealed in every judgment, confirmed by every deliverance, stooping to number the hairs of our head, overcoming evil, in all its subtlety, with heavenly wisdom, visiting

misery, in all its depths, with deeper compassion, unutterably stern in its severity, unfathomably profound in its counsels, unspeakably gentle in its condescending kindness to the least and meanest of the creatures of God. This tree of life strikes its roots deep in all the events of Providence, where the carnal eye sees no sign of the Divine presence. But hereafter it will be a spreading tree, under whose branches a whole universe of ransomed souls may find shelter, whose fruits shall satisfy them with an endless variety of heavenly joys, and the very leaves shall be for the healing of the nations. O how blessed, how delightful must be the privilege of seeing all things in the light of a goodness that is without flaw, and without weariness; to discover perfect love and boundless wisdom in all the vast range of creation, providence, and grace, and to enter into the full import of that song of praise, of which eternity can never exhaust the meaning—"He is the Rock; His work is perfect, all His ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." "Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints!"

The coming glory of the Church of Christ has many aspects, and all of them are full of blessing. But perhaps this is the most delightful of all the

rich blessings which compose the promised inheritance, that we shall see the Lord as He is, and know even as we are known. It is but a faint glimpse of the Divine perfection, of the grace of the Lord Jesus—of the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, that we can attain in this valley of sin and death. But when the veil is drawn away, and instead of the cherubim with flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life, the angels at the gates beckon us into the heavenly city, how blessed must it be, to see the King in His beauty, while every cloud of fear, suspicion, and darkness is done away. The love which tracks the course of one single believer from the cradle to the grave should be enough to fill his lips with ceaseless thanksgiving. How much more, when we see this love, along its path of silent mystery, following all the sons of God through every varying scene of their pilgrimage; and see it pursuing with a voice of deepest sorrow, and warnings and invitations, sealed by the death of Him who hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, the rebels with whom it seems to plead and weep in vain. Here indeed is an ocean without bounds, without dimensions, in which our thoughts lose themselves in the deep abysses of the Divine goodness. These treasures are laid up in store, but the day of revelation is at hand. Silently, every day and every

hour, these fruits are growing upon the tree of life ; and when the mystery of God is finished, and the Lord returns to complete the work He has begun, and accomplish the restitution of all things, then His glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. The jar and tumult of worldly strife will be hushed into silence, the dreams of human philosophy will pass away like a cloud, and disappear. On the ruins of all the world's phantom greatness a glorious vision will then arise, the revelation of thoughts of love which are from everlasting to everlasting, a counsel which has never failed, a goodness that has never suffered the taint of sin, a wisdom that has seen the end from the beginning, an almighty power which has triumphed over a perverseness of evil that seemed incorrigible, and difficulties that seemed insuperable ; which has brought good out of all evil, and light out of the depths of darkness, and at length subdued all things under the feet of the wondrous Redeemer, that God himself may be all in all.

Let us learn, then, my Christian brethren to look forward, with steadfast hope, to this grace which is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And O, may those who have never begun to taste of this tree of life, this holy happiness to be found in the knowledge of our God and Saviour, come at once in faith, that they may eat.

of these pleasant fruits. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come." In the cross of the Lord Jesus a new and living way is opened, by which the most guilty and vile may draw near, and have boldness of access into the most holy place through the blood of Jesus. No cherub with sword of flame bars the approach, but the angels themselves invite us to enter in. There is joy in the presence of those blessed spirits over one sinner that repenteth, over one prodigal restored to his Father's home. O that the dwellers in the streets and lanes of this great city, worn with care, wasted with disease, and too often debased with sin, might be raised to the hope of this better city, this more glorious metropolis; where instead of the feverish din of trade and the ravages of death, there is the pure river of life, proceeding from the throne of God, and the tree of life with golden fruits on either side of the river, society in its purest, noblest forms of mutual love and happiness, all consecrated to the glory of the true and eternal King. For the saying is faithful and true, though proud hearts may despise it, and the slaves of sin may be deaf to its simple and solemn message—"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates to the city. For without are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers, and whoso-

ever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent Mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst, come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus."

LECTURE VI.

FREEDOM FROM THE SECOND DEATH.

BY THE REV. W. FREMANTLE, M.A.,

RECTOR OF CLAYDON, BUCKS.

REVELATION II. 11.

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

THE encouragement and instruction contained in this epistle manifestly indicates a time of persecution. And we may conclude that all who suffer for righteousness sake, are entitled to the comfort which it is graciously intended to convey. The epistle to the Church of Smyrna is the epistle to martyrs throughout the world. The consolation with which it abounds is not based upon any temporal or transient consideration, but is drawn from the fountain of eternity, and given like an early drop of those showers of blessing which will fill

he soul for ever. We have not to treat of the ordinary motives to courage and fortitude, we are not invited to look back upon the past or survey the present, but in the attitude of dying men we are brought face to face with the last enemy, and are taught to gather in support from the future alone. The tremendous realities of the eternal world are brought into contrast before us. The resurrection to life, the resurrection to death. Christ the first to redeem, Christ the last to judge. Dying in His humiliation, coming in His glory. Awarding the crown of life to His elect, the curse of the second death to the reprobate.

Such are the topics brought under our notice, and I earnestly invite your intercession at a throne of grace that the consideration of them may be sanctified, and that we may be delivered from the prejudices of philosophy, falsely so called, and have our minds opened and enlarged to receive the whole counsel of God, so far as it is revealed in the Scripture. I will divide the subject into the three following heads :—

- I. The practical exposition of the text.
- II. The great principle involved in it.
- III. The prophetic application of it.
- I. *The practical exposition of the text.*

It will be admitted that whatever future interpretation may be given to the epistles to the seven

Churches, there is a distinct allusion to the local and historical circumstances of each. And it is almost impossible not to associate the early history of the Church of Smyrna with the exposition of the text. The martyrdom of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, at 86 years of age, suggests the probability of his having been the angel of the Church to whom the epistle was addressed, but whether he was or not, the account of the Smyrnæan persecution, which has been preserved by Eusebius, proves that the Divine message had not been received in vain either by the Church or by its bishop.

In the epistle of the Church of Smyrna, giving a detailed account of the sufferings of the martyrs, we find the contrast of temporal and eternal punishment frequently mentioned. Thus in one remarkable passage we read as follows, "Doubtless their magnanimity, their patience, their love of the Lord deserve the admiration of every one, who though torn with whips till the frame and structure of their bodies were laid open even to their veins and arteries, yet meekly endured, so that those who stood around pitied them and lamented. But such was their fortitude, that no one of them uttered a sigh or a groan. Thus they evinced to us all, that at that hour the martyrs of Christ, though tormented, were absent as it were from the

body. Thus they despised the torments of this world, and by one hour redeemed themselves from eternal punishment. The fire of savage tormentors was cold to them, for they had steadily in view a desire to avoid that fire which is eternal, and never to be quenched. And thus when the aged Polycarp was brought into the amphitheatre, the Proconsul said, "I have wild beasts at hand to which I would cast thee unless thou recant." "Call for them," replied the martyr, "for we are immutably resolved not to change the better for the worse." The Proconsul added, "Since thou makest so light of wild beasts, I have a fire that shall tame thee unless thou repent." To this again Polycarp replied, "Thou threatenest me with a fire that burns for an hour and is presently extinct, but art ignorant, alas! of the fire of eternal damnation, and the judgment to come reserved for the wicked in the other world." This primitive testimony cannot be overlooked in the practical exposition of our text, it is an echo of the promise, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

But this historical view of the text is borne out by the experience of the Church in all subsequent ages. Satan has always employed the fear of bodily suffering as a means of silencing the outspoken testimony of truth. Let any one carefully

read the details of martyrology, and he will see how intensely effective such a weapon has been, and how strong must be the motive which will enable a man physically as well as morally to be faithful unto death. The disciples are not the only men who have fled and forsaken their master under the pressure of fear. Thousands from that day to this have done the same. For one who could burn how many have backslidden. Satan well knows the power of this terrible engine of persecuting torture. Knowing that man, every man, more or less, shrinks from suffering, he has invented every form of cruelty; he has put into practice every conceivable aggravation of torture, as if he would copy, so far as it can be copied, the very torment of hell, in order to crush the faith of the invisible and unfelt, by the fear of what is seen and suffered. Hence the burning fiery furnace, and the lion's den, the sawing asunder, the rack, the slow fire, the cruel mockings and scourgings, the burying alive, and brutal barbarities of which it is not lawful to speak, the false imprisonment, and false accusations, whether inflicted by Roman emperors, who were heathen, or Roman kings, who were Papists, or Roman Popes, who were Anti-christian, have all been the work of Satan. All have spoken the same language. All have exhi-

bited the same blasphemous principle, of making the fear of man to appear more terrible than the wrath of God.

We unhesitatingly affirm that to attempt to force the conscience of a believer in Jesus by the threat or infliction of bodily sufferings, is nothing less than satanic, and they who have sanctioned the blood-stained tribunal of the inquisition, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the annihilation of the Albigences, and the fires of Smithfield, have to be told now, as in the days of Polycarp, that it is the devil who casts such as John Baptist, and Peter, and John Rogers, and the Madiari into prison ; that it is in Satan's seat, where Satan dwelleth, that the faithful martyr, like Antipas, is slain. How needful then and reasonable at the moment when the soul is overwhelmed with the prospect of suffering, whether in mind, body, or estate, that a higher and stronger motive should be presented to us ; and this is just what we find in the passage before us : " Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer." " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." " He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

And is not this the practical antidote to Satan's malice ? Is not the prospect of the better thing we may gain as well as of the worse thing which may happen unto us a prevailing and triumphant motive

to patience? Was it not this which made Moses forsake Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible? Was it not this which enabled others who were tortured not to accept deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection? Was it not this which made Bishop Hooper say, "Life is sweet and death bitter, but eternal life is more sweet and eternal death more bitter?" And is not this the true application of our blessed Saviour's words to all His disciples whom He sends forth as sheep in the midst of wolves?—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forwarn you whom ye shall fear. Fear Him which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell," or as it is in St. Matthew's Gospel: "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." Such then generally is the exposition of the text. He that overcometh the fear of death which man can inflict, shall not be hurt of the second death, into which God will cast the unbeliever and the apostate.

II. We are to consider the great principle involved in our text.

It will be necessary to compare the negative promise in the text with the positive promise in

the preceding verse, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life," is the positive proposition—"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death," is the negative—but the crown of life and the second death stand in precisely the same relation to the victor who gains the one and escapes the other: both have reference to the future, that is to the state after death, and consequently involve the principle of eternity. Whatever in point of duration the crown of life may be, that must also the second death be; otherwise the force of the motive would be lost to the faithful sufferer; the things temporal being balanced against the far more exceeding and eternal weight of things eternal. And if the crown of life, that never fadeth, involve the principle of eternal happiness—the second death, from which there is no resurrection, must of necessity involve the principle of eternal misery. If the crown of life be the reward of the righteous, the second death must be the reward of the unrighteous. And having arrived at this conclusion, we would protest against the system which some have adopted of criticizing every expression in which the word eternal and everlasting occurs, and by an induction of a few exceptions or doubtful texts seeking to establish a limit to the punishment of the unrighteous, a system which if admitted as regards the punishment of the

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wicked, would equally overthrow the eternal existence of God Himself. For there is no other word to express the eternity of God besides that which is used to express the eternity of punishment hereafter. And having thus protested against this system as illogical and unphilosophical, we would adopt the contrary course; and having discovered as we have in our text the principle of eternity, we would apply to it those passages of Scripture which legitimately and grammatically belong to it. And where we find the same contrast in the terms used we apply to them equally the same attributes of eternity. Thus when our Lord says (John iii. 36), "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," we understand that the principle of eternity applies to both the believer and the unbeliever. Again, in Matthew xxv., "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." And again, John v. 29, "They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation," is a simple confirmation of the same principle.

But this may be further proved by a brief examination of the meaning of the words life and death, as read in Scripture.

As to the first, there can be no question that when life was given to Adam at the creation, it was eternal life. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." And if Adam had not broken the commandment, he would have lived for ever. He was sinless, and if he had continued sinless, there was nothing to shorten or destroy life. When, however, sin entered into the world, death passed upon all men, and we must not limit this to the death of the body but to the death of the soul also. And this death, regarded as the penalty of sin, can be nothing less than eternal death. For it is written again and again, "Dying thou shalt die"—as if to mark a double death, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." And consequently if the life of Adam in innocence was eternal, the death to which he was exposed as the punishment of his sin was eternal. Now let us admit the doctrine of the atonement, and if life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel, and by the Gospel only—if by Jesus alone death is vanquished and the gate of heaven opened to all believers, then our view of death advances another step, and we see a death which affects the body of a believer and a death which affects the soul and body of an unbeliever. A first and a second death; or in other words, a first death, which is

temporal, *before* the resurrection, and a second death, which is eternal, *after* the resurrection, corresponding to the description given by St. Jude, ver. 12, of those who are twice dead plucked up by the roots, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

If this be so, a believer in Jesus has nothing whatever to do with death, as regards his soul. He is delivered from its sting, and consequently can never suffer its pain. "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord. He that believeth in Me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." He may have the fear of death before his eyes, he may endure much pain and agony of body ere he die, yet if there be truth in the promise, Jesus will not suffer any pains of death to fall at his last hour upon him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep My saying he shall never see death" (John viii. 51). Your life is hid with Christ in God. And as the subterranean aqueduct does not separate the stream which passes through it from the fountain head, but rather maintains and secures the uninterrupted supply of living water; so the valley of the shadow of death does not cut in twain the life of the believer from the life of Christ, but rather makes it more sure, for we know that when the earthly house of this

tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. To him death is gain—for to depart and to be with Christ is far better. But what is the condition of the unbeliever?—he is dead while he lives, and when he passes from this earthly scene he has a fearful looking for of judgment. The wrath of God abides upon him and he shall never see life. He waits and must wait to vindicate the righteousness of God and to suffer the eternal penalty of the second death when the fulness of the time of judgment shall arrive, and it is impossible for heart to conceive which is the more terrible condition of a lost soul, the anticipation or the endurance of a second death.

Thus it will be seen that our principle is established by an appeal to the atonement as well as to the legitimate harmony of Scripture, and if it be objected that the time of a sinner's probation may be extended beyond the grave, and that the fires of purgatory in the intermediate state may in some way purify the soul, which was not sufficiently purified by penances before, I answer that we shall be judged for the deeds done *in* the body and not for those done *out* of the body. And that until the resurrection, the body, whatever may happen to the soul, is in the prison of the grave and cannot do good or evil. There it remains like a book

which has been printed, published, and read of all men. And you might as well expect that the punishment of an author by heavy penalties would obliterate the paper and letter-press of the book which he has written, as imagine that the punishment of a spirit in purgatory will alter the moral state of a body, which, with all its sinful propensities and responsibility, must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The immediate transition from death to judgment is emphatically marked by St. Paul when in comparing Christ's atonement with His future glory, he says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27). The parallel in both cases is complete, nothing can be added to the one offering of Christ to make glory more sure, nothing after the one death of the body can be done to alter, modify, or avert the judgment.

And once more, if it be urged that after the judgment it is possible for the punishment of the wicked to exhaust itself and for condemned sinners under the pressure of their woe to repent at last and surrender to Christ, I answer that the supposition is directly contrary to the principles of perfect and infinite justice, both in the character of God and in the experience of man. The terms of man's judgment and the time of his probation are irrevocably fixed. The rejection of the Gospel

during the period of life, not only exposes the sinner to the sentence of exclusion from the kingdom of God, this is only a part of his misery, but it infallibly hardens his heart and sears his conscience in impenitence and rebellion against God. Despair is the horror of hell. He has, by his own impenitence, annihilated the place for repentance, and he is without hope. And where has it ever been seen that the infliction of punishment has produced a change of heart in those who are obstinately and irrevocably determined in resistance to the law which punishes. The punishment of fallen angels, for many millenniums, has not abated their pride and enmity to God, nor will the binding of Satan for a thousand years hereafter quench his malice against the Church of Christ. The brand of Cain and the reprobation of Esau did not soften their hatred towards God and their brethren; he that is unjust will be unjust still, and he which is filthy will be filthy still. The lake of fire may harden the soul in fury and revenge, but it will never melt it into loving penitence, or separate the dross of reprobation from that which has been, and is now, proved to be reprobate.

And thus, having shewn the encouragement which the text presents to the hope of a suffering Christian, and the eternal principle which it involves, I proceed in the last place to point out—

3. *The prophetical application of it.*

This will naturally lead us to inquire, first, the time to which it refers ; secondly, the parties whom it concerns.

I. The time to which it refers. The expression "second death" occurs three times in the Apocalypse, and in each it stands in connexion with, and subordinate in point of time to, the resurrection of the just. In the twentieth chapter a chronological sequence of events is given, and that in such definite terms, that the relative periods of the first resurrection and of the second death may be clearly established. The order of events is as follows :— First, the binding of Satan, and the reign of saints and martyrs for 1000 years ; secondly, the loosing of Satan, the deceiving of the nations, and the casting of Satan into the lake of fire ; thirdly, death and hell delivering up the dead which are in them, the final judgment, and the casting of death and hell into the lake of fire, which is the second death. I pass over some intermediate points, such as the great white throne, and the opening of the books, in order to fix your attention upon the points which mark the chronology. And here you will observe we have three distinct marks. 1. The binding of Satan, and the resurrection of those who overcome. 2. The loosing of Satan, and his final destruction. 3. The casting of death and hell into

the lake of fire. Here is a progressive destruction of the enemies of Christ. The beast and the false prophet go first into the lake of fire, then in course of time that old serpent, the Devil, and, finally, death and hell follow in their order, and this is the second death. The first resurrection commences, the second death closes the period. Now, let us put by the side of this, the statement of St. Paul, in 1 Cor. xv., and I will ask any unprejudiced mind, whether the parallel is not complete in all its parts? "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Here, let it be observed, that as a period intervenes between Christ, the firstfruits, and the "afterwards" of His saints at His coming; so there is a space between His coming, and "the end" when He shall have put all His enemies under His feet. The false prophet, the beast, and the devil, and, finally, the last of all His enemies, which is death. And the Holy Spirit describes this in the words of my text as the second

death. This is the climax—"This is the second death." Such then is the conclusion to which we have come, and of which we have abundant evidence in other passages of Scripture. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some in their order to everlasting life, some in their time and order to shame and everlasting contempt." And, now, before I pass this important branch of the subject, I may be permitted to give my reason for rejecting an interpretation which has been put forth, and which seems to demand a refutation from those who take the opposite view. It has been urged—1. That none but martyrs rise in the first resurrection. 2. That the rest of the dead are not the wicked from amongst whom those who partake of the first resurrection are taken; and 3. That the second death takes place at the beginning, and not at the ending of the 1000 years.

As to the first objection, it is enough to say, that it is a simple matter of syntax. Either the translators of the English version have made a mistake, or the conjunctive particle is employed in a sense to which there is no parallel in the Apocalypse. The text runs thus—"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and the souls of them which were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God." The

following words admit of further consideration, but I do not press them.* Now, if the conjunctive particle "and" expresses the existence of something in addition to that which had already been described in the vision, then the translators are right in inserting in italics, "I saw," but if the particle is explanatory, *or rather* demonstrative, of what the apostle saw, then it is almost impossible to conceive why some other form of expression was not used, for, as it now stands, there is nothing whatever to limit those whom the apostle saw sitting on the thrones to the martyrs. He saw thrones, with persons sitting on them, and the souls of martyrs. To affirm that the apostle saw none but the souls of martyrs sitting upon the thrones, would require the whole structure of the sentence to be transposed. Again, it is said the rest of the dead cannot be all the wicked, because the original word (*νεκρος*) is no where used to describe a class. The dead must therefore be a mixed company of good and bad. Now, the word *νεκρος* occurs nearly 130 times in the New Testament, and is, in fact, the only word employed to denote the dead, whether good or bad. It is used indiscriminately for good—for bad, and for both ; and you might as well argue that ("*οι νεκροι*" *εν Χριστω*), the dead in Christ, in

* See Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, ad loc.

1 Thess. iv. 16, are a mixed company, as assert that the rest of the dead (*οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν νεκρῶν*), after the first resurrection, in Rev. xx. 5, are not a residue of wicked left until the general judgment. But, in the third place, it is assumed that the resurrection of the just and of the unjust must be simultaneous, and consequently that the second death must be at the commencement of the millennium. The objector seems to have overlooked a main element in the passage before us, viz., that Satan will not be loosed out of prison until the end of the thousand years, and that death will certainly follow the destruction of Gog and Magog, therefore the second death cannot be before Satan's last effort to deceive the nations. Nor is this all; if the second death takes place at the commencement of the millennium, then the wicked will be judged before the wicked one, and death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire before the Devil. Whereas the order of the Apocalyptic visions reveals to us, first, the casting of the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire at the coming of Christ (Rev. xix. 20); secondly, the casting of Satan into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 10); and, finally, death and hades, and whosoever was not found written in the book of life (Rev. xx. 14—15). It is not, then, from a single text of Scripture, but from the harmony of many concurrent passages, we have come to the

conclusion that deliverance from the second death, in point of time, implies a participation in the first resurrection, at the commencement of the millenium. And, as Noah was hid in the ark a week before the flood descended upon the ungodly, so will the saints be with their Lord, and escape those things which are coming upon the earth.

But, secondly, we have to consider the parties whom it concerns. And, here, as we have seen that there is a very general description of the saints and martyrs who shall receive the crown of life, so there is as plain a description of those who shall have part in the second death, in Rev. xxi. 7—"He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son," describes the one class. "The fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death," describes the other. And now let us endeavour to realize the tremendous gulph which separates them. We have a law of righteousness, established by the eternal decree of God, that cannot lie, securing the priority of blessing to the heirs of promise. They at the first appearance of their Elder Brother in the day of His glory, will be made manifest, for they are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

If so be they suffer with Him, they shall be glorified together. It is fitting that space should be given for the exhibition of this glorious body of prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, and that without anything to divert its attention from this one spectacle of triumph, the world should behold the myriads of the redeemed formed into one body of love for ever. When Christ's prayer will be fully answered—"The glory which Thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one: I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." And, in the period of delay, while Satan is bound, there will be a further display of the law of righteousness; hitherto fallen man has been seen under the influence of the tempter, the usurping god of this world; but in the pause before the final judgment, man will be seen in his natural state, without a tempter; when the true effects of the fall will be seen without any interference of spiritual agency. Then will the righteousness of the covenant in Christ be magnified in the salvation of the elect, and in the condemnation of the Devil; and the existing family of man will stand for a little space, in order that the power of redemption may be made more clear, and that the world may know that man in his fallen

state cannot, even without a devil, stand by himself. And this leads us, finally, to see how, at the close of all, the law of righteousness will be vindicated in the condemnation of the ungodly. What, is it enough to say that the Son of God died upon the cross, suffering the agonies of eternal death, in order that He might gain the victory over the devil, and over death? Are there no monuments of righteous vengeance to be seen among the sons of men, who have sinned a worse sin than the fallen angels, seeing they have sinned against mercy which angels never knew? What! are saved men to be made higher than angels through the redeeming grace of Jesus? and rebellious sinners who have done despite to the Spirit of grace, who have counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and trampled under foot the blood of Christ, putting Him to an open shame, to be exempted from the due reward of their deeds? then, indeed, might devils rise up in the judgment, and condemn the righteousness of God. Then might devils claim deliverance from the flames of hell. But, if the lake of fire is prepared for devils, it is prepared for the ungodly; and all equally, and in the same place, if we may speak of hell as a place, will, in the agonies of unceasing torment, prove that there is a God that judgeth in the earth—that sin is that evil and accursed thing which

nothing but the blood of Christ can forgive—that hell is that second death which no succession of ages will ever terminate. Oh ! my beloved brethren, what awful thoughts crowd in upon the mind as one contemplates these truths as realities. How tremendous are the motives to holiness, devotion, and singleheartedness, in the service of Christ, when one stands between the two extremes—the crown of life and the second death. There is no other alternative, but one winneth the prize—to miss the crown is to fall eternally. Think of this, you who make an easy path of religion. Victors, escape the wrath to come. None else. Think of this, you who believe in Jesus ; a few more steps and the prize is won.

LECTURE VII.

THE HIDDEN MANNA, THE WHITE STONE,
THE NEW NAME; OR, THE CHOICE
GIFTS OF THE KINGDOM.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM CADMAN, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S, SOUTHWARK.

REVELATION II. 17.

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”

THE points of similarity common to the epistles addressed to the Seven Churches, have been, doubtless, considered in former Lectures. Upon these it will not be necessary for me to dwell. I may assume, also, that the more general instruc-

tion to be derived from this epistle to Pergamos is familiar to the present audience. I proceed, therefore, at once to consider the prophetic aspect of the promise of the text, into which it is our present business to enquire. May the Holy Spirit make me duly sensible of the great privilege conferred upon me, in being permitted to speak to my fellow-Christians on so heavenly a theme; and may your hearts and minds, my Christian brethren, be so prepared by His Almighty grace, that I may be instrumental to-night in advancing the honour and glory of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

There are three distinct but connected promises in the passage before us. I will endeavour to investigate their meaning, and then to suggest some lessons of instruction to be derived for our encouragement and warning.

It is desirable, however, in the first place, that some principles should be laid down, on which we may proceed in our investigation—as, for example, that the promises before us extend to all believers, and not to the faithful at Pergamos only. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto *the churches*.” And, next, that the time of the fulfilment of these promises is future. They are intended for the present comfort of him that is overcoming; but they point him to a future recompense. The terms, therefore, in which some

of them are conveyed, may be taken as illustrative of the believer's present experience ; but their full meaning can be seen only in the light of future glory. "The Paradise of God," "the crown of life," deliverance from "the second death," plainly point to the future ; and, in the same manner I believe, that "the hidden manna," and "the white stone," and the "new name," of which the text speaks, point to the future. They are 'the choice gifts of the kingdom.'

I will observe, as another important principle to be remembered, that these promises become due at the revelation and kingdom of Jesus Christ. If the promises are to all believers, they cannot be fully accomplished until then. They remind us of a victorious general, coming forth to address his soldiers after conflict and victory, mentioning the names of the most distinguished, and bestowing upon each the honours they have won.

Two other observations, only, I desire to premise. The first is, that as the promises in the text are clothed in figurative language, the origin and meaning of the figures must be sought for in Scriptural allusions, or in the manners and customs of those people to whom the Scriptures were originally addressed. The second observation is, that the imagery which runs through this epistle to

Pergamos is taken from a feast. In allusive contrast to the idolatrous feasts which Baalam suggested, and which the Nicolaiatans defended, the Saviour sets forth the feast which He had provided for His faithful servants. The description which He gives of Himself, as having the sword with two edges, borrowed from the first chapter, and repeated again in the nineteenth, corresponds with this imagery. Nothing was more common in ancient feasts than for the king to inflict instant judgment upon those whom he had discovered to be perfidious. Thus it was with Ahasuerus, in the case of Haman. Thus did Phineas execute judgment, when jealous for the Lord God of Hosts. Thus it is represented in the parable of the wedding garment, when the king came in to see the guests. Thus modern travellers tell us the practice still prevails in some Eastern countries in the present day.

Now, the Nicolaiatans were members of the professing Christian Church; as such, they were doubtless partakers of the Lord's Table. But, from their holding the doctrine of Balaam, it is probable that they were present also at the licentious feasts which were held in idolatrous temples; as such, according to St. Paul, they were "partakers of the table of devils." They were, therefore, confessed friends, but perfidious servants of

Christ ; and He threatens them that He will fight against them with the sword of His mouth. But His warning to them is mixed up with encouragement to His faithful servants. His two-edged sword is only for His enemies ; while they are sitting down to eat and to drink, and rising up to play, His wrath will come upon them, and slay the wealthiest of them. For His own faithful servants He has better things in store than the gratification of carnal appetites, and the indulging of sinful pleasures. "To him that overcometh," He says, "will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." The imagery is that of a feast.

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These principles being remembered, we may proceed to apply them in the interpretation of the threefold promise before us.

And, first of all, respecting the hidden manna. There can be no doubt that there is an allusion to the manna which fell in the wilderness, and which was the ordinary food of the Israelites during their journey to Canaan. There can be no doubt, either, that this manna typified Christ. In the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, and the forty-eighth verse, we find our blessed Lord thus referring to it : "I am that bread of

life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Now, to partake of Christ, the bread of life, is to become one with Him in the spiritual life. This union is formed and maintained, on the one hand, by the faith of the believer,—on the other, by the indwelling of His Spirit in His people. The life, therefore, which they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God. It is a life of faith. It has been often urged, therefore, that inasmuch as this life of faith is to the world a hidden life, the food, or sustenance, which supports that hidden life may be fitly described as "the hidden manna." This, however, is far from satisfactory ; especially as there are circumstances in Scripture which seem to give us a more definite idea respecting what is really meant by "the hidden manna." Turn we again to the Scripture history. In the sixteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, and the thirty-second verse, after the account given of the manna in the former verses of the chapter, we read—
 "Moses said, This is the thing which the Lord com-

mandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations ; that they may see the bread where-with I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony, to be kept." On referring to the language of the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, we find distinct mention made of this particular manna, which was placed in the holiest of all. We read in the ninth chapter, and the third verse,—“ After the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all ; which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant ; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.”

Now, the question may fairly arise, whether there is not a distinct reference to this circumstance in the promise mentioned by our Lord in the text. We have seen that the ordinary manna was the type of our Lord Jesus Christ,—His flesh which He gave for the life of the world. We have seen also that a portion of that manna, which ordinarily

speaking was subject to corruption, was yet preserved before the Lord through their generations, and that it was hidden from public view in the most holy place. Can we doubt as to the anti-type of this "hidden manna?" Are we not reminded, that as the manna was hidden in the most holy place, so Christ, the true manna, has entered into the holiest, even into heaven itself? And may we not therefore conclude, that as the earthly manna was the type of Christ in His humanity, giving His flesh for the life of the world, so the hidden manna is a type of Christ in His glorified humanity, now before the throne of God, and surrounded by the cherubim? The spiritual life of the Christian is maintained by a believing participation of Christ, the bread of life. The future glory of the Christian will be derived from union and communion with Christ in His resurrection life. And hence the deep meaning of the apostle's language in the third chapter of his epistle to the Colossians: "Your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." We may paraphrase this language thus: 'Your life is hid, as the manna in the most holy place,—hid with Christ, who is gone into the most holy place, even into heaven itself; and when Christ who is our life shall appear, then the temple of God shall be

opened in heaven, and there will be seen in His temple the ark of His testament; "the hidden manna" will be revealed, and we who now live upon Him by faith shall then appear with Him in glory.'

Thus the promise appears to teach us, that he that overcomes shall be united with Christ in the glory of resurrection-life, and immortality, as surely as he is now united to Christ by living faith. This is confirmed by the frequent illustrations which are given of the future glory of Christ's kingdom, under the same imagery of a feast: "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God"—"blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb;" and most wonderful of all, that passage which we have in the 12th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, and the 37th verse—"blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." How great will be the privilege of Christ's ransomed people in their resurrection glory! Their privilege is great in that spiritual life which is now maintained by the power of the Spirit of God: the world knoweth them not, because it knew Him not. But how much greater will be the privilege, to see Him as He is, and to be like Him, both in soul and body!

He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

The Saviour promises also to give to His victorious people "a white stone." Now, as I have already observed, the explanation of this must be sought either from scriptural allusions, or from the manners and customs of those to whom the Scriptures were addressed. Amongst ancient nations the use of the white stone was very common, both in public and private acts. That which is most frequently alleged as explanatory of the text is the custom of giving a white stone to the arraigned prisoner on his acquittal; whereas, a black stone would have been the symbol of his condemnation. As a similar stone was given on elections to accepted candidates, it has been urged that the white stone is simply a token of the justification and acceptance of Christ's people. But to this interpretation there are some serious objections. Those who have been described as admitted to the heavenly feast have been already absolved, justified and accepted; and they have had an earnest of their justification and acceptance in the gift of the Spirit. Their justification, moreover, when the Lord Jesus confesses their name before the assembled angels, will be of an open

and public character; whereas, in the text, the expression, "no man knoweth," intimates a certain secrecy of favour connected with their public acceptance. Besides this, the white stone given in token of the prisoner's acquittal, had no name engraven upon it; whereas, this is said expressly to have a name written on it, although known to no man "saving he that receiveth it." We seek, therefore, some other interpretation, more in accordance with the text, and in conformity with the imagery which the whole passage supplies.

We find, then, that a stone was given to those who were victorious in public games; that a stone was given to the slave that had received his freedom; that a similar stone admitted the poor to receive a share of the public bounty; that sometimes, again, a stone was given to soldiers, with a watchword upon it which was known to the whole army. But in all these cases that which was written upon the stone was known to others, as well as to him that was the possessor of it. Indeed, the value of it, in most of these cases, arose from publicity. But the value of this stone which our Lord gives consists in its individuality and secrecy. Leaving all these allusions, then, I am brought to the conclusion, that we have all that we want for the true interpretation of the

passage, by keeping before us mainly the idea of a feast.

Nearly all ancient nations appear to have held friendships, arising from the exercise of hospitality, as most sacred. One of the customs practised at the time these friendships were formed was the interchange of a token, by which at any future time they could recognize each other, and lay claim to the fulfilment of all the duties of friendship. This was sometimes done by taking a white stone and engraving thereon some word, upon which both the host and his guest agreed; then, breaking the stone, each kept half, and whenever they met each other it was a token of their brotherhood and regard. The token given and received, be it borne in mind, was a pledge of perpetual friendship which might not be broken, and an assurance that the recipient so long as he retained it, would have an interest in all the love and favour which the giver could bestow, and that he might at any time lay claim to his friendship. To this custom there are continual allusions in ancient writings. The Holy Scripture is not without allusions to it. In the East, monarchs, when their courtiers or others came to give counsel, were accustomed to place food or refreshment before them; and during the

feast, or at the conclusion of it, advice was tendered, and he whom the monarch delighted especially to honour, received from him a signet or token, as an undoubted pledge of unswerving friendship and of his instant elevation to the highest dignity in the state, next to the sovereign himself. Such was the ring which Ahasuerus gave to Mordecai, of which we read in the Book of Esther. In the case also of Joseph, we find Pharaoh saying, "See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt," accompanying the words with the giving to him of the signet or token; as if he would say, 'You may know by this token which I have given, that you are made next to myself in the empire.' Now, as the idea of "the hidden manna," which we have already considered, gives us the notion of hospitality, is it not quite consistent to interpret the bestowal of the white stone as that which immediately followed the feast, according to ancient customs? and if this be a true interpretation, then we shall be enabled to perceive something of the blessedness which the Lord Jesus has in store for His faithful disciples, and of which this white stone is intended to be the seal and the emblem. By this He would intimate to them the perpetual brotherhood and the endearing friendship which is to exist between Him and His faithful soldiers and servants for evermore.

But now there is the remaining part of the promise in the text to be considered. "In the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." In what has been said already, reference has been made to the inscription which was sometimes placed on the white stone, as a pledge of perpetual brotherhood or friendship. But this deserves more detailed notice. We find that it was of old the custom to give a new name to those who were called into a new condition. Abram's name was changed on the occasion of his being raised to the dignity of becoming "the father of many nations." Jacob also, was honoured with the title of "prince of God," when he had wrestled with the angel and had prevailed. His name was changed to Israel. This custom prevailed not only amongst the Jews, but amongst other nations. The Bible tells us that the Egyptian king changed the name of Joseph, when he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. The Babylonian monarch also changed Daniel's name, and the name of his companions, when he found them skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science. We conclude, therefore, that this "new name" has reference to that new condition in which Christ's people shall be placed at His coming. In confirmation of this, we find that even Jesus has a new

name given to Him, when He shall be revealed, wearing upon His head His many crowns. We are told in the 12th verse of the 19th chapter of Revelation—"His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself." This new name seems to indicate that manifestation of glory which Jesus will then make, which till then will not have been manifested. He will then appear, not only as the Word of God, but as the King of kings and Lord of lords. But at that time His people too are to be raised to dignity and honour. They are to be under Him "kings and priests to God and the Father." Christ will make His faithful servants "rulers over many things;" yea, even "over all that He hath" (Luke xii. 44).

When we consider, then, what will be the position of Christ's people, when He thus admits them to the honour and the glory of His kingdom, and when we remember the teachings of Holy Scripture on this subject, we see at once how significant is the intimation in the promise before us. For remember, that the dignities and honours which Christ shall bestow will be righteously but variously awarded. To one will be given authority over ten cities; another will have authority, but not so extended. Each one will have his proper place allotted to him in the kingdom which shall

endure for ever. And this bestowal of dignity and honour will be such as to convey the Lord's recognition of the services and sufferings of His people in His cause. God is not unrighteous, that He will forget your work and labour that proceedeth of love, which love ye have shewed for His name's sake, who have ministered to the saints, and yet do minister. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; . . . yea, saith the Spirit, . . . and their works do follow them." "He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

When, therefore, the white stone shall be given, upon which the name is written "which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it," may we not look upon this as indicating the Saviour's acceptance of the past services of His people, and the dignity which He apportions to them in His kingdom for the future. How surpassing the glory to which they shall then be admitted! Only let us try to realize it in our own case, and how must our hearts be warmed at the very thought of it. The inward consciousness that Jesus is pleased with us,—the overflowing gratitude from the consideration of His amazing love and grace,—the burning desire to serve Him,—the gladness which shall take possession of the heart to see Him wearing His many crowns, and having that honour

which has been so long denied Him in this world, in which He once appeared as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"— and the wonder and surprise at the discovery of all the great and glorious things which He hath prepared for them that love Him! Oh! what glory is in store for the servants of Christ, when they shall be permitted to "eat of the hidden manna," and to have the "white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it!"

Such, then, seem to be some of the choice gifts of the kingdom. And now let me proceed to suggest a few lessons of instruction, to be derived from this view of the subject, for our encouragement and for our warning.

And in the first place, Christian brethren, may we not learn a lesson of gratitude? The love of Christ, how great! how wonderful! in making known to us such "exceeding great and precious promises!" To think that this message has been sent to us, after He was crucified and rose again from the dead, and was seated down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, should convince us beyond doubt that although His warfare is over He does not forget the trials and the anxieties of His people yet on earth, whose struggle is not yet over, and whose victory is not yet won. He reproves them when it is necessary; He loves them too well to

spare even chastisement; He often warns before He strikes; but He often so smites that they feel that the affliction with which He visits them enters indeed into their souls. But this is when He sees that there is a "need be" for such severe discipline; and He would not have them in consequence of it to be downcast and sad and melancholy. He knows all their difficulties; He can sympathize with them in all their sorrows; He recognizes every desire to glorify Him; and as we see in the case before us, soon after His own ascension to heaven, He hastens to tell us by the mouth of His beloved apostle, of that blessedness which "eye hath not seen," which "ear hath not heard," and which it "hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive," but which "God hath prepared for them that love Him." He might have reserved the knowledge of all these great and glorious things to the very end of our journey; and if He had done so we should indeed under such circumstances have had reason to say with the apostle, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." But He has been pleased to reveal to us glimpses of that glory, in order that we may be cheered on our way, and that by "the joy set before us" we may be encouraged as He was to "endure the cross and to despise the

shame." It may be that we cannot do without affliction; but by anxiety and perplexity He is disciplining us for the future, and all experience of them at the present should make heaven dearer and the love of Christ more precious. The messages of our gracious Lord are sweet and consoling, but what will His own presence be? We hear Him calling us to the marriage supper: be it our business, like the faithful "bride, the Lamb's wife," to make ourselves ready, to work and wait, and if need be, suffer for Him, that when His chariots are sent to fetch us we may have nothing to do but obey the summons, and so "be for ever with the Lord."

I gather also from this subject an instructive lesson as to the necessity of heavenly-mindedness. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth," is the constant exhortation of the Word of God. And have we not in the knowledge of such glories as have been unfolded to us in these promises, great assistance to the discharge of this important duty? The world, no doubt, has its attractions, and those attractions are sometimes such as to endanger, because they entangle the child of God; so that the exhortation has not lost its force—"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed in the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and accept-

able and perfect will of God." Attention to such an exhortation as this will cause our conduct to be so different from that of the multitude, that it may expose us to misrepresentation, and may occasion perplexities. The young Christian especially may feel this to be a trial. Perhaps his heart in some degree still clings to the world, caught by the glare and excitement of its pleasures and customs, and hearing so much from worldly companions of their enjoyments, and of their gaiety. But oh ! let us remember, that one real glimpse of heavenly glory will blind the eye to worldly magnificence. What are worldly feastings, in comparison with the heavenly banquet ; or worldly friendships, in comparison with the token of eternal brotherhood with Christ ; or worldly applause in comparison with the joy proceeding from hearing our Saviour say—" Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord ;" or worldly honours, in comparison with the dignities of that kingdom which shall never pass away ? I care not for the shadow, if I can but secure the substance. The one eludes my grasp ; the other is near me, with me, in me. Christ is all to every believing soul ; and having Him they have all things.

Then, thirdly, what a lesson does our subject afford, as to the importance of constancy and faithfulness in Christ's service. These glorious

promises are addressed "to him that overcometh." The expression points out the believer's position encompassed by difficulties, and having a warfare to wage with enemies that are numerous, and powerful, and subtle; but it points out, also, that his position is not untenable. He needs not desert his post, nor run away from his duty, however trying, or however difficult may be the circumstances in which he may be placed. It is not easy to imagine any circumstances of greater difficulty than those in which the faithful in Pergamos were placed. There, was the seat of Satan's power; there, erroneous doctrines, contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, were propagated; there, unholy practices were indulged, even by some who professed, and called themselves Christians; there, persecution, even to death, arose for the truth's sake. Yet, it was to Christians situated as these were, that the Lord Jesus Christ addressed the exhortation to hold fast, and not to deny His name. It was a difficult duty to hold fast under such accumulated trials; they needed encouragement to preserve them from denying His name. But He knew their difficulties; He was well acquainted with their dangers; He could bear with all their weakness, and He encourages them to endure, by setting before them the choice gifts of His kingdom for those that overcome. Our position may

not be precisely similar to theirs; the prevailing form of worldliness in the present day may not take the same turn as it did in their day. Then, worldliness consisted in idolatrous feastings, with all the sinful practices that attended them. In this day, we may not be exposed to similar sins, but even now there is some form of worldliness, or other, which places truth in jeopardy, and which tends to sully the fair garments of holiness. And, against all that is erroneous in doctrine, and all that is vicious in practice, it is the bounden duty, not only of Christian ministers, but of all Christ's faithful servants, to protest. The revealed truth of God is the only standard by which we are to discover erroneous doctrine, and vicious practice. Making this revealed truth the ground of our protest, we must expect to encounter the opposition of the world, and to suffer persecution sometimes for the truth's sake. But the protest cannot be omitted, if we would be faithful soldiers of Christ.

Gird on your armour, then, ye Christian soldiers! "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong." The end of your conflict is before you. It is more than enough to encourage you, to remember that the great Captain of your salvation has told you what the final issue will be. Better have His commendation, when He comes to take to Himself a people prepared for the Lord,

as an army prepared for the inspection of its general, than to forfeit this commendation, and gain the applause of the whole world. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father, and before the holy angels." "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this sinful and adulterous generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels."

Thus, then, in the subject before us, we have lessons of encouragement,—to the exercise of gratitude, to the cultivation of heavenly-mindedness, and to constancy and faithfulness in Christ's service. And, now, there is a lesson of warning also afforded to those who are professors of the name of Christ, but concerning whom He might say, as He did to those of old—"I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." In interpreting the passage before us, we have had occasion to refer to the custom in Eastern countries, when a monarch would immediately execute judgment upon some perfidious servant. Be it remembered, that all those who are traitors in the cause of Christ must be one day discovered and punished. The false servant,—he who says, "Lord, Lord," but who is in heart attached to the cause of the enemy,—must necessarily be detected when the

King comes in to see the guests, and discovers at once the man that has not on a wedding garment, The command is, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." How important that our hearts should beat with true allegiance to Christ! Think of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, and some Christian professors shut out! Think of the possibility, O professor! of seeing with thine own eyes the heavenly feast, but having no enjoyment of that feast,—cast into outer darkness! Let each one of us determine at once whether indeed we are bearing true allegiance to Jesus, our Lord and King. You remember the story of the ancient ambassador drawing a circle round those with whom he treated, when they were inclined to delay, and demanding an answer before that line was passed. Suppose that God in His secret counsel should have determined this night to draw a circle round you, and that after this night you may never have another opportunity of hearing His Word, or of having your attention directed to the Lord Jesus Christ: is not the very possibility of this a thought that should make a Christian minister bold to use all earnestness in beseeching you to be reconciled unto God? Leave it not as a matter of uncertainty. If there be a

doubt respecting your true allegiance to Christ, repent, lest He come quickly, and fight against you with the sword of His mouth. By all the glories of His future kingdom—by all the promises which He has given to His faithful servants—by all that wondrous love which He makes His people to experience, when He manifests Himself to them, as He does not unto the world—by all that wonderful forbearance which He exercises towards those who profess to be His servants, when they do not the will of His Father which is in heaven—I beseech ye, each one of you, yield yourselves unto God ; for “He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “Come out from among the wicked, and be separate from them, and touch not the unclean thing.” Cleave with full purpose of heart unto the Lord. And so, in the present happy experience that “in the keeping of His commandments that there is great reward,” you shall be enabled to rejoice in hope of that glory which shall be realized when the promises of the text are fulfilled. “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” “He that hath ears, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”

LECTURE VIII.

THE EPISTLE TO THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA : OR, THE KINGSHIP AND GLORY OF THE SAINTS.

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REVELATION II. 18—29.

“ And unto the angel of the Church in Thyatira write ; these things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass ; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith (better, faith and service) and thy patience and thy works ; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things (rather, this) against thee, because thou sufferest (or, lettest alone) that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I

gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto you I say, and the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of My Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

THE point of view in which our Lord is presented to us in the portion of Scripture which forms the subject of the present course of Lectures, you must have felt already to be one of most peculiar interest. His work on earth is over—He has risen, and ascended, and re-entered the glory which He had with the Father before the world was—and the principalities and powers which surround the eternal throne and people the highest habitable

sphere of creation, have presented anew their homage to their reinstated Lord. What else remains but that He should receive their worship and listen to their acclamations? So it might seem to us, if we could not read His heart. But He has left behind Him in an evil world, to buffet with its sorrow and its scorn, loved ones more dear than life; and though He has already sent out on His willing mission the Holy Comforter, more than a compensation for His personal withdrawal to His otherwise orphan Church, He presently Himself seeks out in Patmos the beloved disciple, that through him He may urge to holiness, warn against apostacy, encourage under persecution, and perfect for glory, those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren. And what communications can He make that shall fulfil these purposes of His love? Even those in which the Church hath ever found her teaching and correction, and comfort and strength—those which reveal His fulness and open out His all-sufficiency. If He has aught to tell her to rouse her drooping energy, and to stimulate her slackening perseverance, it must be about Himself; and to describe His own inexhaustible perfections, and to declare His unsearchable riches, is to bid His Church trust the one and take what she will of the other; for He holds His fulness for her supply, and lives to succour her necessities.

On the present occasion, we have not so much a subject to discuss, as a passage to expound.

I. The first point which comes under our notice is one which comprises that designation of our Lord and those features of His character which He has selected in addressing the Church of Thyatira in particular. We have no knowledge of the state of that Church at the time, beyond what we gather from this epistle.

“These things saith **THE SON OF GOD.**” There is no allusion to this title in the vision of the first chapter, but it is implied in the doxology which accompanies the salutation; He “hath made us kings and priests unto God and **HIS FATHER;**” as well as in the description given of our Lord as “the first-begotten from the dead.” It has been attempted in some quarters to restrict this glorious title to a dispensational relation. It is enough however for us, that the whole complexion of Scriptural statement is against such a notion, and that only the most unwarrantable treatment of the Divine Word can suffice to bring into any doubt the great truth of the eternal generation of the Son of God. “Begotten of His Father before all worlds,” is a statement of our creed which we believe to be based upon the fullest and plainest Scripture testimony. At the same time, it is also very clear, that there is a sense, most precious to

the Church of God, in which this title belongs to Jesus, not only as the Everlasting Son of the Father, but as our "Emmanuel," "God with us." It was said by the angel to His mother, before His birth, "*therefore,*" that is, in relation to some antecedent circumstances, "that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the *Son of God.*" This title has therefore a distinct connection with His human nature, and with His manifestation in the flesh ; and it wonderfully completes the relations which are so essential to our Lord in that condition. He was accustomed to call Himself "*the Son of Man,*" shewing thereby His oneness with us, without which redemption had been impossible ; but He also calls Himself, as in this passage, "*the Son of God ;*" the value of which expression here does not consist in its implying His Deity, which is antecedent and independent ; but its infinite value to us lies in this, that it declares a relationship in which, through the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, we admit of being associated with Him, and which carries a title to a boundless inheritance, of which His brethren, partakers also of flesh and blood, shall likewise be fellow-heirs with Him.

The expression moreover points very distinctly to His standing in *resurrection*. He was "declared (or *defined*) to be *the Son of God* with power,

according to the Spirit of holiness by the *resurrection* from the dead." And it is as the *risen One* that He claims, and shall receive from the Father, His inheritance as the Son. "Thou art My *Son*; this day," the day of the resurrection, "have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." So again (Heb. i.), "God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His *Son*, whom He hath appointed *Heir* of all things, who . . . sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High, being made so much better than the angels, as He hath *by inheritance* obtained a more excellent name than they."

Having announced Himself by this glorious and singularly significant title, He specifies two characteristic features of His glory, taken from the vision of the first chapter. These have been already discussed, and a very few words, therefore, may suffice in reference to them here. He declares *His eyes to be like a flame of fire*; penetrating, discriminating, purifying, to His Church; consuming and destroying, as when He looked upon the host of the Egyptians, to all them that are His enemies; eyes of light and love to the penitent, the perplexed, the suffering, and the weary; but of wrath to the apostate, and vengeance to the unbelieving.

"*And His feet are like fine brass,*" glowing with

fire, as in a furnace. This must designate His perfect holiness and righteousness, as it is written of Him, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity," and seems beautifully appropriate to one who washed His disciples' feet, teaching them to be clean every whit. The stability and strength may also be implied, with which He both administers the economy of His Church, and overrules the waywardness of a rebel world; while there is intimated, the certainty of that coming judgment in which He shall tread down the wicked with the soles of His feet.

II. But we pass on to the second division of the passage, comprising His message of encouragement and warning to the Church.

1. *I know thy works.* This, in the case of each of the Seven Churches, is the preliminary statement; and what is thus invariably repeated ought to be most carefully noted. It is evidently intended to remind them of the judgment according to works, which will take place when He cometh; and to suggest, moreover, that the common estimate made of them is continually wrong, in the one or in the other direction. Many works look specious, which He will utterly reject; and, again, many are precious in His sight, which the world sets no store by. This latter case is strikingly illustrated in the detailed enumeration which follows.

2. I know "*thy charity*," or, *love*, to me, to

mine, to all saints ; the life-blood, so to speak, of all thy duty and suffering, thy labours and thy devotedness ; giving to all thine obedience the acceptableness of a living sacrifice, which, as I have presented it from time to time before my Father, with the incense of my own intercession, I have known to be full of that love which is My Spirit's work in thee, of conformity to My own holy nature.

3. And *thy faith* ; thy reliance on Me and on My word, through which thou hast often touched the hem of My garment, and claimed My willing mercy ; trusting Me for thy salvation, and thy circumstances ; confiding in My providence and My grace ; recognizing thy high calling, and achieving, through the things unseen, the victory over the world, and the wicked one who rules it.

4. And "*thy service* ;" and well could He say, "I know thy service," for it is best explained as the close and loving imitation of Himself, in all His cheerful and tender ministry to *His own*, whom the Father had given Him. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to *minister*." I am among you as He that *serveth*." And He appreciates, as no other can, all those gentle offices of love, which, without respect of persons, and for His sake who hath loved them all, each saint exercises towards the rest, amid the pressure, and the need and the trial, which all must feel in turn.

5. And "*thy patience*;"—*endurance*, as the word means—a quiet, steady bearing up under sufferings and reproaches: another feature in His own blessed pattern. "Consider Him who *endured* such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Keenly does He see, and thoroughly does He know that struggle and its effort, in which the soul, without any excitement to stimulate, or any admiration to sustain, not only resists impatience, but reaches even complacency in suffering, counting it all joy, and thankful for such privileged conformity to her Lord.

6. The commendatory portion of the epistle closes with the striking acknowledgment, that "*the last works were more than the first.*" How is such a notice characteristic of Him, who had said, "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Here was evidence He loved to see, of growing life, advancing education, ripening experience:—Time more profitably, as well as more fully, occupied; talents devoted to higher objects, and higher usury gained, against the reckoning of the Master; a larger proportion of opportunities turned to good account; ordinary circumstances handled with more of spiritual dexterity; and the whole conduct and conversation pervaded by a greater redeeming power of heavenly affections; youth not pleaded as an excuse for procrastination,

nor age for indolence and indifference; but the soul advancing in its spiritual manhood, to the utmost limit of its present sojourning, where it shall step onward into its full endowment of eternal life and glory.

The singularly *loving* exercise of our Lord's discriminating judgment in the above passage, cannot but strike us forcibly, and ought to prove deeply encouraging. Afterwards, indeed, He employs it in the detection of deficiencies, and for the administration of solemn warning; but so far it is thrown into the scale of encouragement. One grace after another is noted and enumerated. It may be, that the saint in unheeded devotedness, perhaps even neglected or despised, is daily yielding these spiritual fruits, to the unknown blessing of the world around him. Jesus knows them all, and will one day well remember to reward what the world has been incapable of appreciating. It may be, that the saint himself has deemed that he scarcely possessed any grace at all, and that he has been at a loss to trace, along the course of his unprofitable history, evidences, such as he feels there ought to have been, either of love, or of devotedness. But still Jesus knows them all; and they shall be remembered, even to the cup of cold water, in the day of His appearing.

The remaining portion of the message to this

Church is expostulatory to His own people, and menacing towards the transgressors.

Some suppose that the Jezebel here mentioned was some individual at Thyatira, to whom our Lord gives this significant name ; and, no doubt, in that case the punishment threatened was fulfilled in all its circumstances. But, even then, the substitution of this mystical designation for the real one teaches His Church that, from time to time it must expect the repetition and recurrence, both of individual sinners, and of forms of evil in connection with its body, such as have been found from the beginning ; and these letters, like other Scripture, are thus written for *our* learning. I cannot say that I see my way to an application of these seven epistles to seven successive stages of our present dispensation, by which arrangement the passage we are considering would embrace the Papal apostacy. But, nevertheless, I cannot but feel that there is very considerable analogy between the prophetess here described, and the Romish Church, which it is intended we should carefully notice. Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, was an idolatress, and the means of introducing idolatry widely and influentially into Israel. She persecuted to death the Lord's faithful servants, and all but succeeded in exterminating His prophets ; while she fed those of Baal at her own table. In her treatment of

Naboth, there was a complication of wickedness perhaps never exceeded. Reckless herself of sinning, she in no wise scrupled to make others the tools of her sin ; and she and they together perpetrated their perjury and their murder, by an infamous abuse of power, merely to gratify the licentiousness of her own will. Her whoredoms and her witchcrafts are, moreover, especially noted, and there scarcely can be a doubt that she was guilty in these respects, literally as well as spiritually, tiring her head and painting her face. Her counterpart in the Church at Thyatira called herself a prophetess, and taught and seduced the Lord's servants to commit fornication, and to eat things offered to idols ; and she and her followers professed a knowledge of those deep things, which, as it would seem, they avowedly derived from their communications with Satan, unless this be a word added by the Spirit, to shew their real character and origin.

It would not be difficult to trace the parallel, to which we have already alluded, between this woman and Rome ; but we cannot do so at any length. Scripture and history alike would aid us in this task. We have not the shadow of a doubt that Rome is the mystical Babylon, and one short passage of the inspired description of her fearful character may well suffice. " The woman was ar-

rayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones, and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication : and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

History fully corroborates, and amplifies, to an almost unlimited extent, this description. Rome's idolatry is indisputable ; her spirit of persecution has only been limited by her means and opportunities of indulging it ; the allowance of perjury is a blot even upon her books of education ; and her provision for sin is rendered systematic through her penances, and indulgences, and dispensations. Her confessional is organized immorality, and her very religion is a system of frauds upon God and man.

But is this the ultimate application of the passage before us ? or may we look for its still more signal illustration ? We know that the destruction of Babylon precedes by some short period the coming of the Lord, and takes place under most fearful circumstances ; and that all those who are partakers of her sins shall be also partakers of her

plagues. She has also truly had space to repent of her fornication, and she has not repented. Moreover, she seems doomed, in some remarkable manner, to exhibit in the coming dispensation the result of her fearful apostacy, by some permanent phenomena of local fire. In this way she may remain a witness and a monument of God's righteous indignation to the saved ones on the earth, testifying the glory of the King in searching the reins and the hearts, and in visiting iniquity with just retribution. We do not see, therefore, any necessity to look farther for a fulfilment of the mystical statement, as we believe it to be, of the passage before us. At the same time we should not be surprized to find, that when the Antichrist is revealed, and the literal lying wonders become manifest in the very last days, in connection with idol worship and the priesthood of the false prophet, there may be some more precise fulfilment of the circumstances stated in this passage of our Lord, combining even an exact literal accomplishment, with its full spiritual signification.

But it is important for us here, before we pass on, to notice the solemn exhortations and instructions administered to the Church, in connection with the evil against which the Lord testifies. You will observe that the angel of the Church is not charged with going astray, but with *suffering*, or

letting alone, one, who usurped a place to which she was not entitled, and taught that which was alike opposed to all sound doctrine and practice. Here is a lesson for every age of the Church, and especially for ours. The question is not merely whether we hold truth ourselves, but whether, when we might prevent it, we allow error to be propagated. Whether the assault be made under the form of spiritual fornication, which is idolatry, on the one hand, or of Satanic, or rationalistic philosophy on the other, is our jealousy at once aroused, and is our resistance uncompromising? Has Popery, in her own garb, or it may be under the guise of Tractarianism, tired her head, and painted her face, and looked out at the window; and have we, like Jehu, trampled her under foot; or, have we been enticed into her dwelling, and lost our senses under her enchantments? It is a striking feature in our passage, that this remissness is the *one* thing found fault with. The angel in what he did, seems to have done rightly enough, but he let this sorceress alone. It might be for the sake of peace; it might be, he thought little mischief could result; it might be, there was a speciousness about her teaching which took with many, and that it was an unpopular thing to expose or resist it; it might be indolence, and the hope that the evil would soon correct itself. But

the eyes of fire, and the feet of brass, could not pass over such an omission, and solemn are the words of warning in which the correction of this delinquency is urged. Oh! would that on the walls of our Houses of Parliament, of our bishops' palaces, yea, and of our ordinary homes, through the length and breadth of Protestant England, there would come forth the hand and write in letters of flame, "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel." How can we wonder at our chastenings, how should we not rather be thankful for rebuke, when the most fatal results must succeed to our indifference, if indeed it be only indifference, and our damage from such connivance must be inevitable. "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her, into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." May one feature in the coming day's humiliation be, deep and unfeigned repentance for our want of greater jealousy for the truth of our God.

We have still to notice, in this part of our subject, the spirit of tender, but holy exhortation, which breathes from the lips of our Lord towards His faithful ones. Upon those who have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, He will lay no other burden. There seems to be a reference here to the decision of the Council at Jerusalem, where it was deter-

mined that the brethren should be required to abstain from those practices of which our Lord here complains, but that no other burden, that is, of a ceremonial kind, should be imposed on them. How light is His burden, and how easy is His yoke! But, as in the first temptation, reasonable as is the restriction, and large as is the liberty, we lend an open ear to the teachers of discontent, and we will have no freedom short of licentiousness.

The connection of the exhortation—"But that which ye have, hold fast till I come"—with the preceding words, "I will lay on you no other burden," indicates the object the Lord has in giving them this holy liberty. "His service is perfect freedom;" and His people are relieved in this dispensation from burdensome ceremonial services, that they may bend their whole soul to those matters of faith and holiness, which are the essentials of all true religion. What we *have*, may be summed up in the Word of God, and in that precious personal teaching which we have received from the Holy Ghost. In these consists our inestimable treasure; and no little conflict will it cost to retain, in such days as these, more than the shell of these blessings. The common point of assault, by all false systems, is the Word of God, however the plan of the assailants may differ. Whether it be by prohibition, by substitution, by

pretended supplementary inspiration, or by a system of vicious interpretation, the object is one, namely, to put out the only lamp to man's feet, and the only light to his path. Nor does the effort of the wicked one by any means rest here. There is such a thing as the holding fast, by a loving heart, and a sensitive conscience, of God's precious truth; and there is no end of his endeavour to make the memory treacherous, and the soul unfaithful in dealing with revelation: while he has long tried to make either questionable or contemptible that inward experience of a heavenly testimony, by which alone the letter ceases to kill, and the Spirit giveth life. We want no new developments; no modern revelations; which are but other names for human inventions, and fabrications of lies. The wells of salvation are all we need; accessible, numberless, pure, and inexhaustible; springing from the depths of unfathomable love; the overflowing of the Divine fulness for the blessing of the redeemed creature. The water at the very surface is sweet and lifegiving to the simplest and the feeblest faith; while that from the depths forms a richer draught for those who, by reason of full age, can bear its heavenly potency. Let a man draw as deep as he may from these fountains of mercy; but if here and there he will sink his own well, and gather the waters into his own cis-

tern, he gains that which cannot satisfy, and which must fail. Neither, if we can help it, will we indulge the farther wilfulness of such an one, by allowing him to take from us our portion, and to force upon us his own. We have, through the Lord's mercy, a goodly inheritance, in the pure word which our martyrs rescued, and a Scriptural Church which they founded and framed; and, by grace we will hold it fast, that we give not less to our children, than our fathers have given us.

In the opening portion of this message, nothing is said about the grace of *hope*. Perhaps this was somewhat languishing, which may be possibly implied by the introduction of its glorious object at the close of the exhortation. We can quite understand how, with all the other precious features of the Christian character, any shortcoming in this one might lay a church open to the assaults of seductive doctrines, and defiling practices. "He that hath *this* hope in HIM, purifieth himself even as HE is pure;" and the coming of the Lord is to be that ever present truth, which is continually to keep the Christian braced up to the highest point of consistency, and jealous of the slightest unfaithfulness here, which might impair the confidence with which he would meet his Lord hereafter. Solemn is the caution, but plenteous is the encouragement of those weighty words, "Till I come."

III. We are thus naturally introduced to the remaining portion of our subject,—*the proclamation of the reward to him that overcometh.*

Our Lord in this announcement marks in the clearest manner those on whom the rewards shall be conferred. The victory to be gained must be over sin and evil *generally* ; but no doubt He would draw the attention of each combatant to that form of transgression to which he may be more particularly exposed. It must not be a victory *on the whole*, but *complete*, and *in detail*. Any exception involves disgrace and defeat, and will incur reprehension and loss. Each particular generation has its special form of evil, and against this the struggle must be special, and the victory over it decisive. Nor is it to be deemed enough that we contrive just to escape being vanquished, but rather we should not be satisfied with less than “having done all to stand.” He adds, too, in His message to this particular Church, “*he that keepeth my works unto the end ;*” which seems to point to the extreme difficulty of faithful, persevering, service in the *last* days, and during the reign of the Antichrist. Sentiments, and doctrines, and principles, may be maintained in the closet and in the private circle ; but Christ will have from His servants the steady manifested course of practical godliness ; the faith and patience of daily duty

and endurance ; acting for Christ, as well as professing Christ ; neither compromising our consistency, nor accommodating our standard. “ *My works,*”—works savouring of Christ in His love and in His holiness, distinguishable from the closest counterfeit, and utterly opposed to all the current evil.

But what then is to be the reward of those who so overcome ? It is described under two heads.

1. “ To him will I give power over the nations ; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron : as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers ; even as I received of My Father.”

A very indefinite meaning seems generally to be attached to this promise, and considerable difficulty to be felt in allowing the words their plain signification. This, however, becomes removed as soon as the coming of the Lord, at the end of *this* dispensation, is clearly recognized, the resurrection of the saints at that point of time admitted, and the circumstances of the world, as described in a great many prophecies, plainly understood.

God made this earth to be peopled, and men soon began to multiply upon the face of it. But as men multiplied sin abounded ; and rebellion against the rightful Lord of creation marks the early development of the human family. The flood was the Lord’s judicial interference, vindi-

cating His authority, and punishing the transgressors. The descendants from Noah however, profited little by this terrible example, and as nations became formed, God was rejected as before. They would not retain God in their knowledge; and He gave them up to a reprobate mind; and throughout the history of our world has His controversy with them been kept up. They have uniformly chosen their own gods, and worshipped in most instances the work of their own hands, or the inventions of their own imaginations. The only redeeming point in the account of this world's rebellion was secured by His own interposition in the choice of one nation for Himself; and even they were a stiffnecked people, and constantly provoked Him to jealousy by borrowing the idolatries of their neighbours, and defiling themselves with their abominations. Since the coming of Christ in the flesh we have had more than one nation professing Christianity, but for the most part a false or adulterated Christianity, opposed wholly or in part to God's truth, and evolving continually from itself the most bitter persecutors of Christ and His saints. The course of our world then, from the very beginning, and ever since the incarnation of our Lord, as nationally considered, in its Christian as well as in its heathen aspects, has exhibited either the utter re-

jection of Christ's truth, or that mere nominal admission of it, which was consistent with the deepest enmity to its real and heavenly principles. Now in the counsels of the eternal Jehovah, the subjection of all nations to Jesus, as the second or last Adam, is included in the deed of His inheritance. He teaches His Church this, when He says, "Even as I received of My Father." And we can put our hand upon the passage where His thus receiving is expressly stated: "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto Me; Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee: ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen (*i. e.*, the nations) for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." Other passages might be quoted of similar import. Whereas therefore there has been continual rebellion on the part of the nations against *God*, when we consult Scripture we find, that it takes the special form of resistance to *Christ*. He is the King of all the earth by deed of gift from His Father; and all the idolatry or false Christianity, which has prevailed in the length and breadth of our world, through its whole history, has been the opposition of the nations to the Son of God, refusing Him their homage and resisting His rightful claim. But this opposition is to assume a still more definite character in its organization,

and to become more distinct in its object. Satan, the god of this world by usurpation, and doubtless fully aware of his ultimate overthrow, is nevertheless labouring onward with unwearied determination towards his last effort, whether under any infatuation as to the *uncertainty* of the issue, or whether from an obstinate resolve not to lose even the least occasion of working all the evil within his reach. Accordingly the three unclean spirits go forth under the sixth vial, to gather the kings of the whole world to the battle of the great day; and the nations are at that time gathered against Jerusalem, and the immense confederacy predicted by the prophets takes place. This forms the last great national effort, unless perhaps that of Gog be supplementary. The Beast of Rev. xix.,—that is, as I believe, *the Antichrist*,—will be at its head, and the object of all this national array will be the Lord and His people. “I saw the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and against His army.” Now though the angels will certainly be present, yet the saints are clearly those who are closely attending on Christ; and the fact of the first resurrection evidently happening some time before this, provides for this circumstance: and Christ having gathered up to Himself in the air His

raised and His changed saints, and having as it would seem ordered and arranged to some extent the economy of the heavenly city, descends upon Mount Olivet to take His throne of judgment with His saints as His assessors, and to decide personally by the breath of His mouth, and the brightness of His appearing, the final conflict with the powers of darkness. It is therefore at the battle of Armageddon, that the fulfilment of this promise takes place, and that the saints receive authority over the nations, to rule them with the iron rod and to smite them as potters' vessels. But wherein is specially seen the privilege of such dominion?

(1). In the supreme power of those who have hitherto been weak and oppressed, under the tyranny of these very nations. It will have been their special characteristic that they have submitted to the evil treatment without resisting it. Objects of cruelty and persecution, they will have endured and suffered: and all this affliction will reach its height under the coming Antichrist, when measures will be carried to an extreme of ferocity before unknown. But all will now be reversed; and irresistible power will be wielded by the hands of those who were lately oppressed and tormented.

(2). This power will be exercised in the infliction of terrible but righteous judgments. It will be

the Lord's will that the saints shall execute the vengeance, as it is written, "such honour have all His saints." Sympathy with the indignation of Jesus *then*, will replace sympathy with His tenderness and compassion *now*. Righteous jealousy for their Lord's honour and authority will give its full impulse to the severity with which they will inflict the judgment; and there will be a holy propriety in that day in those very saints becoming the ministers of vengeance upon the apostate rebel nations, who have been vexed by witnessing the insults heaped upon their King, for which they are deputed to award the righteous retribution.

(3). It will be a striking and manifest triumph over the god of this world, which, having been already accomplished upon Himself by his being bound and cast into the pit, will be amplified and completed in the punishment and destruction of his deluded vassals. As it has ever been, so in this final catastrophe, he can only muster his hosts for defeat, and gather them to their confusion. The most complete and best arranged conspiracy which earth and hell have admitted of, the climax of the devil's rage and malignity, will be as the stubble in the flame, under the withering power of the Lord's exalted ones. And when we remember, that in that last conflict there shall be

combined with ordinary flesh and blood, the mightiest resources which spiritual existences can bring into the field, energized by superhuman malice and strength, the promise of our Lord implies that our present struggle with spiritual wickednesses in high places will issue in their total discomfiture by the risen saints, and in the entire thwarting at last of every scheme devised against the followers of the Lamb.

(4). This supremacy of the saints will further illustrate the superiority of their portion over all that the children of this world can achieve for themselves. The shivering of the nations like a potters' vessel, will be the execution by the saints of the ruin, in which they have often foretold that all the hopes and confidences of the ungodly must sooner or later terminate. National interests in their specious greatness and importance have ever in this world been over-riding truth and righteousness; and the boasting and the blasphemy of the nations will reach their height in spirit and in organization in the day of Armageddon. But all shall be scattered and crushed by the righteousness of the Lord's risen ones, and their arm shall deal, with irresistible vigour, with all the combinations of ungodliness.

(5.) The position given them in this promise is one of peculiar contrast, in its glory, to the shame

and contempt which have been their portion here. The interpretation, which we put without any doubt upon the first resurrection, places the very same individuals, who will have suffered from the persecution of the Gentile nations, and who will have been despised and cast out by them, within a very little while, in the other extreme of exaltation and honour, clothed with glory, and absolute in power. And, no doubt, the visible glory of the saints, as well as that of our Lord Himself, will daunt the eye, and make the heart to quail, in those who have before reproached them for their meanness, and slighted them for their want of worldly recommendations. The sentiment on this head is a just one, though it be not inspired : “Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach ; we fools counted his life madness, and his end to be without honour : how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints.”

(6). There seems yet another feature discernible in the promise, though not so prominent as those which we have noticed; that is, the rule of the risen saints over the saved remnant of the nations. When the infliction of wrath is ended, there will remain those, who, drawn by the love, and made partakers of the grace of Christ, will be a seed to serve Him, and over these shall the saints exercise continually their wholesome and heavenly rule. This seems to be one of their most exalted privileges. To them under Christ will be committed the authority by which the righteousness and peace of the earth, and its inhabitants, shall be sustained and prolonged; and their beneficent exercise of dominion shall be the recognized ordinance for blessing to all the happy nations in the flesh. Their administration, therefore, which has been ushered in with signal and characteristic judgments, shall proceed onward in the unfolding of grace and truth; and, in the supremacy of the heavenly kingdom, the earth shall at length find its rest from sin and sorrow, and put on throughout all its borders the garments of joy and holiness.

All the glory thus promised is the gift of Jesus to His people, corresponding with that which He has received of His Father. Such is His covenant relation to His saints, that He can only receive *for them*; such is His infinite love, that He can have

nothing which He will not impart *to them*. Sonship is no nominal, but a real relation ; and not one child of God shall go without his inheritance. The Elder Brother will see to this. “ All things are yours ; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

2. But we pass to the other part of the promised reward, which, not only in itself, but in the way in which it is introduced, is singularly striking. The former portion has seemed both abundant and complete ; and what could we expect more ? And yet there is thrown in, as it were, in the shape of a supplementary gift, and a graceful appendage, a promise of richest blessing, conveyed under a figure of surpassing beauty. Picture for a moment a dark and stormy night, the very heavens covered with blackness, and the earth shrouded in deepest gloom, and some worn and weary traveller, groping his way in intense anguish, longing for the slightest glimmer that might relieve for a moment the agony of his doubt and hopelessness. And, all at once, the clouds break, and the darkness cleaves in the midst, and out bursts in all its brilliant beauty, the morning star, holding out its lamp of hope and salvation to him that seemed well nigh lost ! Oh ! that in some such way, in this our rugged and painful path, the hope that dwells in the sweet promises of our faithful God, did oftener break in upon all our darkness and

perplexity, and beckon us onward in the labour and the strife towards the everlasting day ! But this is not the fulfilment of our promise ; it is only a wish by the way. Let us see if we can gather the true meaning

Jesus tells us, Rev.xxii. 16, "I am the bright and morning star." This promise, then, to the conqueror is the promise to give *Himself*. And what else can He give? or what that is not *in Him*? But, of course, it implies Himself *in a peculiar relation*.

(1). It is clearly a promise of the *resurrection life*. The rising of one of the heavenly bodies is palpably a significant emblem of resurrection ; but this particular star marks the special relations of the event. It comes forth as the night is terminating, and the day dawning. And, as is seen in a moment, the resurrection,—that is the *first* resurrection—as promised at the beginning of the 1000 years, marks the close of the night of this world's darkness, and the dawning of the light of the everlasting day. We confess that the view of a postmillennial advent seems to us to destroy all the propriety of this, as well as of other *incidental* Scripture illustrations, as they may be called : and that to our mind no little confirmation accrues to our view from the exact correspondence of such a figure. The relation of the morning star, in the physical world, rising to bid its adieu to the night,

and its welcome to the coming day, is precisely that of the first resurrection at the end of this dispensation and the *beginning* of the millennium ; but the appropriateness of the figure is lost, if this happens at the *end* of the millennial Sabbath, of which it is very questionable whether it can be said, that there is any night at all. We should not lay the stress which we do upon this, were it not for the perfect consistency which invariably pervades all God's truth, and the unity which is constantly found alike in its statements and illustrations.

The analogy may be even still closer. The time of the first resurrection would seem to be some little while previous to the advent of the Lord in His descent upon Olivet, and, therefore, to precede what may be understood to be the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing under His wings. This precisely answers to the circumstances of the morning star ; and hence, we seem fully warranted in gathering from the statement that early rapture of the saints, which will remove them out of the way, before the last storms and convulsions, which result in those judicial inflictions on the nations, which we have already considered.

(2). The expression seems clearly to imply a position of *authority*. A star, as it is well known, represents a ruler. "Where is the King of the

Jews, for we have seen His star, and are come to worship Him?" "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel." It indicates, therefore, the kingship of the saints, and the dominion which they shall exercise in the resurrection condition. So (Psalm xlix. 14) "The upright shall have dominion over them (the wicked) in the morning (of the resurrection).

(3). But then we must include in this connection the *brightness* and *distinction* of their glory. Both the one and the other feature are characteristic of the morning star. It is at once peculiarly brilliant, and known from all other stars. And the pre-eminence of the saints in that coming life is precisely so described in Daniel, in connection with this very resurrection. "Many out of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . . and they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." The Lord will make His saints in that day the glory of the whole universe, monuments alike of His love and of His power; though all their beauty and excellency will but reflect His own; as all their distinction will consist in their likeness to Him. And, as the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handywork, and the morning star hangs out its lamp to the

praise of the same Creator, so will the risen bodies of His saints exhibit the finished workmanship, and the matchless beauty of a spiritual materiality; and, clothed in full light, and in shapes of perfect symmetry, take the highest place in the *physical* creation, while the saints themselves are *morally* administering the universe of God.

(4). The promise of the morning star seems to carry with it also what we have alluded to before, *the full fruition*, which, after deep and lengthened watching, shall succeed to the hope so long eagerly exercised. If the Christian is in his right position in feeling and expectation, he is one watching for the morning. Threading a wilderness full of danger and of darkness, with a light, it is true, clear enough and steady enough, were it not for his unbelief and his tears,—he is one, not only groaning *over* and *under* his trials, and corruptions, and harassments, but groaning *for* his house which is from heaven, the body of the resurrection. And, therefore, in the long night of sorrow and labour does he often anxiously look onward and look up, earnestly longing if he might but see among the clouds the herald ray of the morning star, soon to be followed by the streaks of the dawn, the promise to him of that day whose sun shall never set. The resurrection will be to his longing spirit the bursting of the day star's light

upon his soul; and, while this world's night is deepening into its eternal darkness, and sinners, though busy, are asleep, he shall, at the moment of his Lord's appearing, spring upward with all the gathered Church to greet the day which awaits them in His presence, and find himself in the land of everlasting light.

(5). This promise may further indicate what the resurrection of the saints *will prove* to the renewed world which is to follow. We have a remarkable circumstance stated in reference to the birth of our present world, namely, that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." We have no doubt that these expressions are rightly explained of the angelic intelligences. But when the millennial glory shall be ushered in, and that long-deferred Sabbath shall commence, in which shall be revealed the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, both the above titles will become advanced in their application.

The *morning stars* will then be the redeemed ones of the resurrection, and the *sons of God* those children of the FATHER, in manifested life, who, as the brethren of Jesus, receive through Him the inheritance and the kingship. These shall then lead the song of the new creation, and bless, through the light and holiness of their ministra-

tions, the inhabitants of a regenerated world : while the heavenly Jerusalem shall comprise within its glorious boundaries all these resurrection day stars, and the nations of the saved ones shall walk in the light of it.

(6). One other feature, as we conceive, in the fulfilment of this promise, will be *the light with which the saint morally, and spiritually, and intellectually is to be endowed* at the resurrection. If it indicates, as it doubtless does, the beauty and brilliancy of his bodily investiture, it cannot but imply the full indwelling in his soul of that light which, from that time forward, will brighten and bless his everlasting day. And as the morning star is the promise of the full meridian splendour, so will the resurrection be the promise of all the glory that will be growing on for ever ; and then, also, will the first light seem to break in with anything like the clearness of full unravelment, upon all the mighty, and wondrous, and loving purposes of our God. And, as the day star beams on the waking eye, and just discovers what the waxing morn will ere long fully disclose, so shall the shadows then begin to flee away, that kept in dimness our Father's will, and that which was seen through a glass darkly, shall be revealed face to face.

But why linger in describing that which must exceed all that eye hath seen, or ear heard, or

hath entered into the heart of man ! How, after all such contemplations, does the loving soul fall back upon Him who is the All in All, and rejoice in the possession of that unspeakable gift, which will comprise all the whole Church can need for ever, for its glory and its light !

IV. We have yet to notice the *correspondence* of the title of our Lord, together with the features of His character, selected in His address to this Church, with the message given them, and the reward promised. It is singularly striking and interesting.

These things saith the SON OF GOD.

We have already noticed the essential connection of this title with *resurrection*. The passage, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee," compared with Acts xiii. 33, teaches us that this was fulfilled when God raised Jesus from the dead ; and accordingly (Rev. i. 5), He is, as we have seen, entitled "The first-begotten of the dead ;" while, in agreement with this, the Apostle Paul declares, "He was defined to be the Son of God, with power . . . by the resurrection." This title therefore carries with it the indubitable pledge of that resurrection, which we have shewn to be included in the promise of the morning star, as well as implied by the assurance of authority over the nations. One or two other passages confirm this.

in so interesting a manner, that we cannot pass them over. In John v. 21, 25, we read, "As the FATHER raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the SON quickeneth whom He will." "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the SON OF GOD; and they that hear shall live." Again at the raising of Lazarus when Jesus has declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life, He connects His wonderful act of power with an express appeal to HIS FATHER: and it is a remarkable circumstance, that the miracle took place, *just after* Martha had been enabled by the Holy Ghost to declare her belief in Jesus as the SON OF GOD. Add to this, that the redemption of the body will be the full *adoption* of the Lord's chosen ones (Rom. viii.); and thus the resurrection Sonship of Jesus stands in the very closest connection with their resurrection, seeing that He calls them brethren, and shares with them His inheritance.

But this title points also to *inheritance*. This scarcely needs illustration. The second Psalm distinctly connects this with the Sonship, and describes it as comprising the heathen and the uttermost parts of the earth. So the apostle (Heb. i.) teaches us, that, as the SON OF GOD, He is appointed "*Heir of all things.*" It is quite in

character therefore that He so proclaim Himself when He undertakes to assign an inheritance to His people, and to carry out by His own right the privilege which is theirs, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

The title also implies *authority*. For the second Psalm also announces this SON OF GOD as KING upon the holy hill of Zion, and commissioned to “break the nations with a rod of iron,” and to “dash them in pieces like a potters’ vessel.” His title therefore supplies as it were the warrant for delegating this same authority, as He does in this epistle, to His people, and for conferring upon them whom He has made kings and priests unto GOD AND HIS FATHER, this glorious and distinguishing prerogative. We cannot help suggesting here for your more profitable reading of the Word the importance of marking *every expression* in the statements of the Holy Ghost. He does not make use of titles or expressions merely because people and things must have some name: but in *all* His language we may always be sure that there is a strict and consummate propriety, and the most perfect appositiveness of selection. Hence it is certain always to repay the closest and most careful investigation. And though some minds from their natural tendencies may in such examinations stray into the region of fancy, yet this must not

deter the honest student of the Word of God from searching into those correspondences in the various portions of His Father's truth, which naturally result from its fundamental unity, and which lead to some of the most interesting discoveries in this mine of inexhaustible wisdom.

The *special features of character* with which this epistle opens may be easily seen to be in accordance with its matter. The eyes of flame and the feet of brass are in perfect keeping with that discernment of His faithful ones, and also of faithless professors, which His statement to this Church indicates. The true nature of His people's service is clear to Him, notwithstanding all the disadvantages under which they may labour. And whatever garb a prophetess may contrive to wear, He that walketh up and down in His Church with the feet of fine brass will separate the chaff from the wheat, and nothing shall deceive Him. It is His *prerogative* to search the heart and to try the reins, that He may give to every one according to his work.

This part of the description corresponds also with the vengeance that shall be inflicted, when He shall dash His enemies to pieces, and trample them under foot in utter destruction. Accordingly in the nineteenth chapter of Revelation, in connection with the overthrow of the Beast and

the False Prophet and their armies, we find the Messiah coming forth; and "*His eyes are as a flame of fire*; and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

IN CONCLUSION, solemn and precious are the lessons which such a passage should leave upon our minds, as the Lord's children, at this time.

1. "Seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus THE SON OF GOD, let us *hold fast our profession*."

2. "Let us labour to enter into rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

3. Let us be abundantly encouraged in our patient waiting for Christ, in all well doing, keeping His works unto the end. Blessed, thrice blessed are they, whose daily conversation is ornamented with those jewels which will stand the trial of the eyes which are as a flame of fire. And here there is no respect of persons. Those with rank and without it, the senator and the Sunday-

school teacher, the wealthy and the wise, or the ignorant and the needy, may all, through grace, wear that robe of holiness which Jesus loves, and walk in that daily course of service and of charity, which He will remember in the day of His appearing.

4. Mark the stress which is laid upon our most carefully abstaining, not only from all entanglement in false doctrine and practice, but even from the slightest *connivance* at any such evil, from which we may ourselves be free. We owe to each other a duty in this respect which requires much grace, much humility, and great love, but which ought to be faithfully performed by each towards the rest. Some errors, which have at length almost desolated the Church of God, have commenced in very slight aberrations; and some mixture of good, which can scarcely be wanting altogether in any new scheme of evil, has secured the tolerance often of unwarranted innovations, which have led to a wide entrance of fatal mischief. It may well be observed, however, here, that a large and full acquaintance with the truth of God is absolutely necessary for dealing rightly with all such circumstances; and, perhaps, this is not one of our ordinary qualifications in the present day. *Partial* views of truth, although right as far as they go, may notwithstanding lead to the rejection of other

truth ; and many in venturing to separate the *precious* from the *vile*, may undertake what they are by no means qualified for, owing to their small acquaintance with the former, and want of experience therefore in its discernment. This is a caution by which perhaps we may all profit at the present time.

Lastly, we may remark how near the glory of the coming kingdom, and the resurrection of His saints, is to the heart of Jesus. How then should these be unceasingly the hope of His people? And if such a hope were more in exercise, how would it lead us to examine more closely into the reality of our religion, and its habitual influence in that inner sphere of being, where the eye of Jesus is ever tracing it in its springs and motives, long before it issues in the outward expressions of the life and conversation. How, if we felt the mighty power of the promise to him "that overcometh," should we seek that the victory to which we are encouraged might be in thought, word, and deed, in all minute detail, as well as in general circumstances. And while thus making every effort, and labouring with all intensity in the struggle, how should we be cheered with the recollection, that He who beckons us onward to the strife, is He who loved us and gave Himself for us ; and that through Him we are fighting a

battle that has been won, and striving for a victory that has been gained.

May we more than ever take heed in our hearts unto the *sure word of prophecy*, as unto a light shining in a dark place, "until the day dawn and the day star arise." May these lectures lead many in the Lord's Church to be waiting in earnest longing and holy preparation for that day; and may we, who may be said to have met here to watch the streaks of the breaking morn, be found waking together, when the first ray of the day star shall salute the sleeping saints, and all the children of the resurrection shall be gathered in the life and beauty of that blessed dawning.

To this end let us walk steadily in Him who is the light, and in whom is no darkness at all, having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, having peace through the blood of sprinkling, which cleanseth us from all sin. So shall our eternal home be that city, where Jehovah shall be our everlasting light, and our God our glory. Amen.

LECTURE IX.

THE REWARDS OF FAITHFULNESS.

BY THE REV. J. BAYLEE, D.D.,

BIRKENHEAD.

REVELATION III. 4.

“Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.”

THE words of our Lord to the Seven Churches are not to be limited to them. “He that hath an ear, let him hear, what the Spirit saith unto the Churches,” is a subscription common to them all. Hence we are warranted in concluding that these Seven Churches exhibit to us the various conditions, moral and spiritual, of the whole Church of Christ at one time or another.

In number seven, these Churches, according to the symbolic character of the Apocalypse, exhibit to us the whole Church. Their individual character and their relations to Christ are most instructive. Each one has something peculiar to itself, and all have something in common. All are alike candlesticks, the receptacles of oil, and fitted to be the dispensers of light. All have the same form of government—each one has its presiding minister or angel. All have to overcome that they may obtain the prize. The presiding ministers are all stars in the right hand of their Lord. The hope of glory with Him is the common encouragement of all.

Their relation to Christ is not less remarkable. The Son of Man was walking in the midst of the Seven Golden Candlesticks. Although the figure of a candlestick is manifestly borrowed from the candlestick in the tabernacle, there is a remarkable change in one respect. That had seven branches on one stem, because under the Mosaic dispensation the Church had one visible centre of unity—Jerusalem or the tabernacle. These are seven separate candlesticks: their union is in Him who walked in their midst. They were visible, but He is invisible. Hence we are taught the mistake of those who seek for an earthly centre of union. The body of Christ has its blessed head in heaven.

There is another mistake in supposing that the candlesticks are the converted only. These Churches contained many that were ready to die, many who had only a name to live. The Church then, is visible: her head and centre of union is invisible—the blessed Jesus.

But let us not leave this teaching until we consider a little more the relation of these Churches to Christ. In the first chapter we have a full description of our blessed Saviour, in beautiful symbols and expressive titles. There He is seen as a whole. In these Seven Churches we see Him in parts. To each one He is what that one wants. To Ephesus, whose angel had failed in love, He shews Himself as holding the seven stars in His right hand and walking in the midst of His Churches. To Smyrna, whose minister and people were to be called to be faithful unto death, He manifests Himself as the First and the Last, the One that was dead and is alive. And to this Church of Sardis, whose presiding angel and the majority of her members were without spiritual life, He declares Himself to be the One that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars.

Dear brethren, we are thus taught a most solemn and to the loving heart a most delightful truth—the Church can be in no state in which there is not something in Jesus to meet that state. He

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has a sword, sharp and two-edged, to cut off the finally impenitent. He has a right hand to uphold those who lean upon Him. He is holy and true that He may convey holiness and truth to all those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He was dead and is alive, that His people may fear not to die with Him that they may also live with Him. He has the seven Spirits of God that of His fulness we may all receive, and grace corresponding to grace.

It is indeed a blessed truth that Jesus has every thing in Him which we can possibly need, and that whatever He has is ours. That Jesus is in our midst this evening. He is amongst us no idle spectator. His Spirit is here. He is speaking to your hearts, He is asking for an entrance, He is willing to enlighten, He is waiting to bless. Oh, brethren, let us open our hearts and give Him a glad and willing admission.

We are more immediately concerned this evening with the Church of Smyrna. Her bishop was altogether unworthy of his office, yet was he a star in the right hand of Christ. He had only a name to live for which reason Christ tells him where to get life, even from Him who has the seven Spirits of God, the Holy Ghost in fulness. He was dead yet Christ calls upon him to do the works of a

living man—"Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain." He had received a solemn commission, and had been taught the truth. In great mercy Jesus said to Him, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard; and hold fast and repent."

It is in the long run with all Churches, "like people, like priest." This dead minister had a people that were ready to die. Yet he had a few names even in Sardis which had not defiled their garments.

It is to these, brethren, that I desire to draw your attention this evening, as setting before us the character and the rewards of faithfulness.

"Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy."

Oh, let us listen to those words of our Saviour Christ with lowly reverence and earnest prayer. In His lips they are living words and powerful. He is amongst us now, and by His Holy Ghost He is speaking them to our hearts.

Let us consider these points in a threefold aspect:—

First—The nature of faithfulness. This is presented to us in the figure of undefiled garments.

Secondly—Meetness for the reward. "They are worthy."

Thirdly—The character of that reward. “They shall walk with Me in white.”

First then, let us consider—The nature of faithfulness :—

“Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments.”

We almost involuntarily estimate people's character by their garments. Gay and gaudy clothing is not the willing choice of lowliness and meekness. On the other hand a chaste propriety and a becoming simplicity of apparel indicate a mind well-regulated in ordinary matters, and occupied in a higher degree with mental and moral if not with heavenly things. A person's profession in life is on suitable occasions indicated by his dress. The military and naval professions, official rank, and even the sacred ministry, are distinguished by their characteristic habiliments.

Holy Scripture, in accordance with its general principle of applying ordinary matters to the illustration of sacred things and spiritual truths, frequently refers to garments as expressive of Christian character. Upon the same principle the symbol is applied to the Lord's manifested dealings. For example, Isaiah says, “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head: and He put on the garment of

vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak" (lix. 17).

To the same purpose our blessed Saviour and His people are represented with the same garments, because they are moulded into the same character: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a *bridegroom* decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isa. lxi. 10).

In a similar strain the Church prays for ministers and people, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy." The gracious answer is, "I will also clothe her priests with salvation; and her saints shall shout for joy" (Ps. cxxxii. 9, 16).

From those passages we can better understand the exhortation to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to make no provision for the flesh" (Rom. xiii. 14); in other words to labour after the attainment of such a character as the blessed Jesus had in this world, and to do so by intimate union with Him. Hence also, to preserve our garments undefiled, would be to preserve such a manifested character unspotted from the world.

The imputed righteousness of Christ is a blessed

garment with which to cover the sinner as he approaches the Divine majesty. His own unholiness are the filthy garments of which Zechariah speaks (chap. iii., ver. 3). That imputed righteousness could not be defiled. It is the Lord's, and not in any degree ours, except by gift from Him.

Those garments which the Sardians are said to have preserved undefiled, could not, therefore, have been the imputed righteousness of Christ, but the garments of a Christian profession, which they had put on in baptism, and which they were to keep undefiled in a walk of Christian consistency : "Walk worthy of God (says the apostle), who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thes. ii. 12). "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. xvi. 15).

Herein, then, consists the nature of faithfulness. It consists in such conduct and conversation as befits sinners saved by grace. They are men who believe in the pardon of their sins, and who realize the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost. They forget the things that are behind, and they press towards the mark for the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus. To them these words are real words,—“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God,

strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness ; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 10—12).

We learn from this Church of Sardis, that faithful walking with Jesus cannot be hindered by outward impediments. The many were dead : the few alone were faithful. The minister had only a name to live ; yet those few ones had not defiled their garments. " He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not " (1 John v. 18).

Dear brethren, let us emulate that blessed faithfulness. We have all our difficulties and our trials, but we have all a Blessed One standing by us, ever ready to enter in, and to sanctify, and to bless. Let us be strong in Him, and walk in Him, as we live by Him.

The second great subject for our consideration is—Meetness for the reward.

This is declared by our Lord in those brief words—" They are worthy."

Worthiness, in the sense of merit, does not belong to the creature. We are unprofitable servants even when we have done all that is in our power, for what can the creature add to the Divine perfec-

tions and glory? How much less can merit belong to the sinner saved by grace !

But worthiness, in the sense of fitness, belongs to every one who is admitted to the heavenly blessedness.

Nothing unholy can enter the kingdom. But there is a deeper truth ; nothing unfit for its place is found there. Dear brethren, this is a thought upon which our hearts should continually dwell, Jesus is looking forward to the day of his espousals, to the day of the gladness of his heart. His people must be fitted to be His bride. The heavenly Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, comes down "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." There is, there can be, no incongruity in the eternal blessedness. The Lord Jesus is looking forward to a true companionship with His glorious Church. We may be assured that the sign is not more real than the thing signified. Eve was the symbol, or mystery of Christ's Church. She was a helpmeet for her husband, without her it was not good for the man to be. In still greater truth is this applicable to the blessed Jesus and His heavenly bride.

Hence the need of witnesses for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Oh ! brethren, consider what it is to be meet for Jesus. We were taught it at our baptism, as well as the means of attaining to it—"Which is to fol-

low the example of our Saviour, Christ, and to be made like unto Him."

"How can two walk together except they be agreed:" and if we are to walk with him in white, we must have been brought into agreement.

Let us then consider a little more in detail this worthiness of meekness.

It is not the gift of another nature to us ; it is the purification and perfecting of the qualities of that humanity which we have already.

We are to attain to this blessed meetness in the fulfilment of ordinary duties with a heavenly mind, under the power and grace of God's Spirit.

The reward *of* doing any thing is far different from a mercenary reward *for* doing it. "*In keeping thy commandments there is great reward,*" is a very different doctrine from asserting that "*for keeping His commandments there is great reward.*"

If we say to a child, learn your lessons well, and you will be rewarded with a piece of money, he is stimulated by the reward for so doing. He may have no love for the lessons themselves. If we say to the same child, Read hard, be diligent in study, and you will become a learned man, we hold out a hope of reward which is in the thing itself. So the mercenary motive of doing good works, hoping thereby to earn heaven, is altogether unworthy.

The desire to obtain meetness for heaven, by the cultivation of Christian graces, is an ennobling and sanctifying principle.

Our Lord says of prayer—"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

He who frequently resorts to his secret chamber, there to hold loving, lowly communion with the Father of Spirits, there to pour out all the desires of his heart before a holy One who knows his frame, and remembers that he is dust, there to ask for help, to plead for pardon, to remember his enemies, with intercessions for forgiveness, and his family and friends with the earnestness of love, to ask for strength and ability to be in the world as Jesus was in the world, he who thus frequently resorts to his secret chamber cannot leave it without having the marks upon him of having been with God. The expression of his countenance, the watchfulness of his conduct, the government of his temper, the heavenliness of his words, the meekness and gentleness of his deportment, all will be the manifestation that he has been with God, it will be his open reward.

Again, she who has learned the blessed lesson of "hiding not herself from her own flesh," but who

“brings the poor that are cast out to her house,” who “*sees* the naked that they may be clothed,” and the “hungry that they may be fed,” she also finds her open reward.

Beside the bed of suffering, and in the chamber of poverty, or sorrow, she learns lessons of meekness, contentment, and trust ; she receives enlargement of sympathy, and compassion, and love, which are, indeed, an open reward in the manifested character of one who has walked in the footsteps of her blessed Saviour. She needs no mercenary hope of heaven to stimulate her to deeds of love and kindness. She finds in them their own reward, not to speak of the inexpressible joy of the conscious approval of Him who says, “Ye did it unto Me.”

Dear brethren, we might in the same manner go through the whole round of Christian graces and duties, and shew how in them all there is the same blessed principle of a resulting fruit in our own moral and spiritual condition. The prayerful reading of the Bible gives an enlightened knowledge of the things of God ; diligence and devotion in public worship produce a devotional and heavenly frame of mind ; firmness of principle, and resistance of temptation in the ordinary commerce of life, strengthen our moral principles, and enlarge our spiritual capacities. All these are enduring fruits.

They form in us the image of Christ. They are appointed means of our being more and more fit to have Him in us. "My little children," says the apostle, "of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (Gal. iv. 19).

This is the force of St. Paul's exhortation—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. xiii. 14).

In the midst of all such efforts we must preserve that inward frame of mind, which constantly realizes the presence of our blessed Lord. "Looking unto Jesus," "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18).

This was the blessed condition of the faithful few in Sardis—"They have not defiled their garments: they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy,"—that is, they are meet for the heavenly companionship. Oh, brethren! let us remember that it is here, and only here, that we are to obtain meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. There is no purgatorial cleansing. The grace of the Blessed Spirit, the providential discipline of life, the faithful walking in love, walking with Jesus here, are the divinely appointed means for that

worthiness. Let us prayerfully labour for it (Heb. iv. 11 ; John vi. 27 ; Phil. ii. 12).

Let us now in the last place consider—The character of the reward.

“They shall walk with me in white.”

They shall be spotless and glorified ; they shall be in eternal companionship with Jesus.

He died for his people that he might present them “ holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in His sight ” (Col. i. 22). No spot, or taint of sin, no defect or diminution of glory, no want of any kind. Perfect, sinless, glorified, they shall stand before all creation as those in whom Jesus shall be glorified, because not only are they sinners saved by grace, but saints renewed in His image, and glorified with His brightness.

Such is their personal condition. Their companionship is this—“They shall walk with me.” On earth they followed Him ; in heaven they walk with Him. In a sense we walk with Him here, for He is our true, though unseen companion : in a sense, also, those in heaven “ follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” But, in a far higher, and more true sense, they walk with Him. They shall sit with Him at His table, they shall be companions of His throne, they shall be acknowledged as His faultless bride. “ They walk with Him.”

Oh, who can tell the blessedness of these words !

The fulness of joy ; the beauty of the holiness ; the fervour of the love ; the intimacy of the companionship ; the deep, deep meaning of our Lord's words, " Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory."

Dear brethren, we have the garments of a Christian profession ; we have the present grace of a living, loving Saviour ; we have a struggling probationary life before us ; we have also sweet words of exhortation, and warning, and counsel. Oh ! let us pray ; let us labour to keep our garments undefiled ; let us take to us the whole armour of God, that in His strength we may overcome. " The Spirit and the Bride say come ; let him that is athirst come ; whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely."

To you, as well as to those Sardians, Jesus says, " He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." " He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Amen.

LECTURE X.

HONOUR AWAITING THE FAITHFUL SOLDIERS OF CHRIST.

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INCUMBENT OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

REVELATION III. 7—13.

*“ And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write ;
These things saith he that is holy ; he that is true, he
that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no
man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth ; I
know thy works : behold, I have set before thee an
open door, and no man can shut it : for thou hast a
little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not
denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the
synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are
not, but do lie ; behold, I will make them to come and
worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved
thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my pa-*

tience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

THE subject to which our attention is to be this evening especially directed, is, "The honour awaiting the faithful soldiers of Christ;" and the passage from which our instruction is to be derived, is the address of our blessed Lord to the Church at Philadelphia. Nor would it have been easy to select a finer and fuller text for the exhibition of those features which are prominent in the character of the faithful soldier, or of those transcendent glories which await him at the coming of his Lord. It presents to us a picture of one of the only two Churches without a fault, and describes in vivid colouring the unspeakable honours prepared for them in the purposes of God. Let us then examine into these two points.

I. The character of the faithful soldier.

II. The honour awaiting him.

We will confine our attention almost exclusively to the passage, the result of which will of course be that certain characteristics of the soldier elsewhere described, as well as other particulars of his coming glory, must pass unnoticed. But there is enough here to call forth in us the utmost energy of holy, steadfast, enterprising faith; enough to fill our hearts with the brilliant hope of coming triumph. May God the holy Spirit guide our investigation! May He raise our thoughts heavenwards! May He nerve each heart for its conflict! May He enable us to hold fast unto the end, and so to overcome through the power of His grace!

I. The character of the faithful soldier.

1. The first thing that strikes us, at the very outset of the passage, is that he is not necessarily a man of might. There was great fidelity at Philadelphia; but, according to the text, there was but little power. "Thou hast a little strength," is the testimony of Him who knew their works. It is difficult to ascertain the exact application of these words to the Philadelphians, for the records of Scripture had been complete before the time alluded to, and the records of tradition have little claim to confidence. Perhaps it refers to the very small number of component members of the

Church. According to history all who could remove had done so in consequence of repeated earthquakes, in which case the Church that remained would contain within it a very small number, and those few most probably of the poorest class. Possibly there was nothing more than a little band of faithful poor: in one cottage a poor woman with her time and strength more than occupied in carefully adapting her narrow means to the wants of her family; in another some old man tottering to the grave in poverty, but with a bright hope beaming in his eye and filling his heart; in another some simple shepherd, who, when his flocks were grazing on the neighbouring hills, could himself look up to the Great Shepherd of his people; and in the simple Church a faithful bishop, with no rank or external station, a tent-maker possibly during the week, but yet, with all his simplicity, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. In the world's opinion, and even in their own, such a Church would have but little strength. They would possess no influence on the world's politics, and they would be very likely to attempt but little under the discouraging conviction that they fell short in power. "Let the great extend the kingdom," would have been the very natural language of their heart: "Let the men of wealth, station,

talents, and influence, let them do the work of God." But the language of their Saviour was different. He looked not so much to their weakness, as to His own power. He passed by the more influential bodies, and He selected Philadelphia for the encouraging assurance, "I have set before thee an open door."

Or possibly the passage may refer to the little strength which they had in faith. True faith is not always strong faith. When the disciples prayed "Lord increase our faith," there was reality, but there was need of growth; and when the afflicted father said, "Lord, I believe," he spoke the truth, but he was equally right when he added, "Help Thou mine unbelief." So in the case of these Philadelphians, though their faith had stood its ground, it may have been feeble; and they may have been like that little band of chosen men whose hearts the Lord had touched to follow Saul, who when others hid in the rocks and caves at the sight of the foe, followed him without desertion, but still "followed him trembling." And I am inclined to think that this is indicated by the words of our Lord; for, though there was an open door set before them, there is no allusion to any aggressive effort for the progress of the kingdom; and, although they had thus far stood firm, their faith seems as it were to have been tottering

under the pressure of the storm, for they required the exhortation "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

In either case therefore we are to regard the Church of Philadelphia as a feeble body, a small flock, poor in circumstance, and, very probably, weak in faith.

2. But though feeble they were firm. The man who knows he cannot swim will cling with the greatest eagerness to the rope thrown for his rescue; and the Christian most conscious of his own weakness, will cleave with the most steadfastness to the strong arm of his Saviour's grace. So it was at Philadelphia. They had but a little strength, but with that little they held fast to Jesus; for the second feature of their character is "Thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my name." The two clauses of this description are quoted together because they appear to describe the same principle of character; and that principle is steady, unwavering, unflinching fidelity to the Lord. It is not so much the brilliant dash of Balaklava, as the firm, unyielding, patience of Inkermann; and this seems to be expressed in verse 10, where it says "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience." It was not simply the word, but the word of patience, which they kept; implying that there was a steady, consistent, and

long-continued endurance in their character. They not merely followed Christ, but they followed on when the heart was weary; like Gideon's army, "faint yet pursuing."

If the two clauses be taken separately, the one exhibits that true feature of Christ's love described by our blessed Lord, when He said, "If a man love Me he will keep My sayings;" keep them hidden deeply within the recesses of his heart, as the guide of his content, and the source of his hope; keep them as David did, when he said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee;" keep them as did our blessed Lord Himself, as we learn from His words, "I know Him and keep His saying." With such a spirit the second clause is intimately connected. There are many motives which may induce a man to deny the name of Jesus, and many ways in which it may be done. It may be done openly, as by Peter, under the pressure of fear; it may be done indirectly, by inconsistent actions, under the chilling influence of worldliness; or it may be done through the influence of fallen teachers, who "bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Peter ii. 1). Now in no form and from no motive did the Philadelphians desert the ranks. If fierce persecutions broke out upon that little flock and there was no human arm

to aid them, yet nothing could loosen their fast hold on the word. The Lord had commanded and the Lord had promised. They were well convinced of His fidelity, and nothing could induce them to deny His name. If worldliness were the snare, which it very clearly is in our own day, there was no shaving off the clear and well-defined line between the world and the Church of God, no endeavour to make the Church as like the world as possible; no vain attempt to meet the world half-way, which usually means to adopt all its principles, and abandon your own. They were ready to keep His word, even that which says, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other." They had decided to hold fast to Christ, and, having so decided, they would not practically deny His name by presenting it before men in a light inconsistent with its true character. And when fallen professors appeared amongst them, men "who said they were Jews and were not," there was firmness still. Those who are anxious to refer us to primitive tradition instead of Scripture, ought to observe how very early and how very extensive was the spread of error even within the primitive Church, for not merely is it found in those Churches especially condemned for their corruption, such as

Ephesus and Pergamos; but even Smyrna and Philadelphia, the two against whom there was no rebuke, even they had their false professors, or pretended Jews. But the people of God stood firm. They were not drawn aside by heresy within, any more than they were crushed by persecution from without. "They kept the Lord's word, and did not deny His name." High names and bold pretensions made little difference to them. They were a simple people and had but little strength; but they were faithful to their principles. They had the pure Word of God, so they kept to that without perplexing their minds with the diverse subtleties of man's opinion. They knew the sweet and holy name of Jesus, so they confessed it boldly, and gave before men their unflinching testimony to His grace.

What a noble example is this to all of us who desire by God's grace to be His faithful soldiers now! We are not called in our own favoured land to suffer martyrdom as witnesses for Christ; but our lot is placed in an age in which there appears to be a peculiar necessity for a holy firmness, and a well-marked decision for God. The world appears to possess even more than its wonted power, and, as at Philadelphia, so in England there are false professors with high claims to sanctity and learning, but who in fact forsake the

word and grievously dishonour the name of Christ. How important then that each child of God keep fast hold on the word, and plead for strength that he may never deny the name of Jesus ! Once let go His word, and the denial of His name will very quickly follow ; once place other words on an equality with His, and other names will soon be found to share His dignity. So it has been with Rome. The word of man has been placed on a level with that of God, and the result has followed that the worship of the creature has been mixed up with that of the Creator. But the faithful soldier must know nothing of this confusion. He knows but one word as infallible, and that word is the Word of God ; and but one name in which he can be saved, and that one is the holy name of Jesus. By this simple knowledge his God keeps him steadfast, and in His boundless grace may He so keep each one of us ! There is sin on every hand to draw our steps aside, sin that never sleeps, sin that penetrates everywhere, sin that can assume ten thousand seductive forms ; and may God grant us His grace that, wherever we are and to whatsoever we be exposed, we may keep a fast hold on the Bible and the Saviour ; that so being instructed by the one, and saved by the other, we may receive at the close His own delightful testimony, "Thou

hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name !”

II. The honour awaiting the faithful soldiers.

If we turn to the passage we shall at once see that there is a double honour here described ; the honour awarded them before the advent, and that bestowed upon them after it. The crown of righteousness is laid up for the child of God until the appearing of his blessed Lord, and, till that day, we must none expect, either in earth or heaven, the fulness of coming glory. But He said of old, “Them that honour Me I will honour ;” and this promise He fulfils even here upon earth. His own servants are not kept waiting to the end for the clear tokens of their Father’s love, but He honours them in the course of their conflict, and encourages their efforts by the assuring evidence of His grace. Consider then—

The present honour to the faithful soldiers of Christ.

1. The first leading feature of this present honour is, that He gives to them enlarged opportunities for the spread of His own kingdom. There is no greater honour that can be given to fallen man than the sacred privilege of labouring for God. What an honour is it for our statesmen and military men to be called by their sovereign to positions

of trust and responsibility!—but what a far higher honour must it be to be called by the King of kings to be stewards of His mysteries, ambassadors for Christ, and even workers together with Himself! This was the first honour put upon Philadelphia. Our blessed Lord would mark His sense of their fidelity, and when, because in their feebleness they had been faithful, He would honour them before the Church and the world, He said, “Behold I have set before thee an open door, for thou hast a little strength.” By the open door is clearly meant the unrestricted opportunity for the spread of His kingdom. It is the same expression which the Apostle Paul employed respecting his opportunities at Ephesus, when he said, “A great door, and effectual, is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” So that we may conclude it is intended to convey the same idea here, and we learn that this comparatively feeble Church, with its little strength, its small communion, and perhaps its feeble faith, was honoured by the opening of enlarged opportunities for the spread of the gospel and the exaltation of the holy name of Jesus. They honoured God by faithfulness, and He honoured them by presenting missionary openings to their zeal.

What a delightful character does this give to all labour for the sacred name of Jesus! Whatever be

our position in the Church of Christ, whether ministers or laity, whether clergymen, Scripture readers, district visitors, school masters, Sunday-school teachers, or other helpers of any kind whatsoever, let us learn this day to regard it as an honour to be either hewers of wood, or drawers of water, when the Lord's house is building. Let none regard their work as a toil or a drudgery. Let none wait to be persuaded, humoured, and almost entreated to make an effort; nor let any be disheartened because they have but little strength: but let all remember that the opportunity of employing that strength, however small, is the first privilege with which God honours His faithful servants. And even if the door presented to you should appear to be but limited, perhaps the remotest curacy in the Church, or the lowest class in the Sunday-school, remember the privilege of being permitted to labour at all, and never forget the honour which God has put upon you, by opening even such a door to your exertions in His service.

And what a noble view does the passage give to the work of missions, and may I not add, to our own position with respect to them? It is a difficult thing to speak of our own Church, our own country, and our own times, for we are always apt to take partial views of events that are close at home. But still it is impossible to apply this text

without the thoughts turning homeward to England's Church and England's missions. I know well that our defects are great and manifold, yet I trust the description of character is not altogether without application. England's Church has passed through her bitter trials; but England's Church is faithful still, evangelical, protestant, and scriptural. I know that we have amongst us those who are unfaithful; but they are not the Church of England, and they correspond rather to the Jews described in the address. I know that many have departed from our midst, and that some even of our clergy have deserted our ranks for popery. But are we on that account to charge the Church which they have left with want of faithfulness? No! on the other hand, we may regard their departure as the best evidence of the unchanging fidelity of the communion they have deserted. Had the Church of England not kept the word of Jesus, but denied His name, as they have done, they never would have quitted her. "They are gone out from us because they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us." They have gone out because the articles were too clear for them; because there was no mistaking the language of the sixth, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation:" or of the eleventh, "We are accounted

righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith :” or of the twenty-fifth, “ In such only as worthily receive the same the sacraments have an wholesome effect and operation.” This was the reason why they left the Church of England, and so long as that testimony which drove them out remains unchanged, so long as it is the standing law that every person taking office in its Church subscribe to those blessed truths, though compassed with infirmity, and surrounded with defect, I trust that God may regard her as a faithful witness for Christ ; and though she may have but little strength, apply to her the language, “Thou hast kept My word and not denied My name.”

But, whatever we may think of the application of the character, one thing is perfectly plain, that there never yet has been a Church to whom God has given in so remarkable a manner the honour of the open door, as He has to ourselves at the present time. He has given to us in the present day opportunities which would have filled the minds of the apostles with praise and wonder. The day may be characterized as the age of openings, for never since the creation have there been openings so manifold, or so magnificent, as in this year 1855. The door opened to the Philadelphians was not to be compared, either in magnitude or import-

ance, with that presented to ourselves. They had but a contracted sphere of labour, but we have the world; they had but slow and imperfect means of communication, but we have every appliance of modern discovery to render accessible the most distant parts of the globe. Contrast the opportunities of those few faithful Philadelphians with the openings brought in rapid succession before our various societies, and you will see that it is impossible to speak enough of the open door which God has given us. And this you will observe is in a remarkable manner peculiar to our own day. Vast continents which, a few years ago, were sealed against the Gospel are now open to it. It is scarcely fifty years ago that Wilberforce was called to contend for liberty to send missions forth to India; but now, nearly the whole of those vast dominions, with the Punjaub and Burmah, are open without impediment. It is scarcely ten years ago that China was sealed against us, but now old barriers seem rapidly to be breaking, if not already broken, and the Chinese wall is no longer able to exclude the Bible. Even Turkey seems to be giving way; and we begin to see as one result of our present anxieties, that the whole Ottoman empire is being rapidly laid open to missionary effort. Now, learning from the text that the open door is given as an honour to the faithful

soldier, what humbling, and yet what stimulating thoughts are suggested by such a fact ! Humbling, because we have not been more faithful, more steadfast, more persevering in His delightful service ; stimulating, because if these openings are an honour given us by God, there must be no sloth, no backwardness, no neglect of prayer, no grudging liberality, but, as the faithful soldiers of our Lord, we must be prepared to push on when He leads the way, to storm the breach which He has made, and to shew no indifference to the honour which He in His boundless grace has thus freely bestowed on His deeply unworthy people. Shall we slight the honour which the Lord bestows on us ? Shall we be indifferent to the privilege which He with His own hand presents to His faithful people ? If He honours us with the opening, the least that we can do is to enter in ; if He divides the waters, His servants must not hesitate to pass forward through the opened path.

The second point in the honour awaiting the faithful soldier is, the *clear manifestation of his divine love*. We have found that there were at Philadelphia certain persons laying claim to high spiritual gifts, and evidently decrying and depressing the little band of faithful soldiers. They are described (ver. 9) as those “ of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but

do lie." It is a very difficult thing to stand steadfast against high sounding claims ; and the simple-minded child of God is very apt to be for a time shaken in his faith when he finds himself frowned upon by those who boast great things in the sight of God. Such, apparently, was the case in Philadelphia. There was antagonism there ; and, as the true believers had but little strength, the majority of power was in all probability on the other side. But this was not to be the case always. The Lord would stand by His own witnesses ; He would give His word to cheer them through their trial ; and when the set time was come, He would humble their opponents, and make His love become conspicuous before the world. " I will make them . . . to come and worship before Thy feet, and to know that I have loved Thee." You observe He does not merely promise the assurance of His grace to their own souls—that they doubtless had throughout their conflict—but He promises to honour them by the public testimony to His love, and that by the conviction of those very men who had hitherto depressed and decried them. How wonderful is the love and condescension of our God ! What a picture does the passage give of His dealings with His people ! He sees the reproach of the adversary, He marks the feebleness of their power, combined with the fidelity of their faith, and

throughout He loves them ; loves them as His redeemed ; loves them as men preserved in Christ Jesus, and called ; loves them as His own ; and loves them to the end ; till at length, when His appointed time is come, He makes that love conspicuous, and enables His little flock to say triumphantly, even before the world, " My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Brethren, what can the whole world offer to be compared for one moment to such an honour? Every thing else sinks into insignificance before it. If He loves us, and if He be pleased thus to make known His love, what is there in creation to be compared with the blessing? Let the rich man glory in his riches ; let the wise man glory in his wisdom ; let the conqueror glory in his victories ; but let the child of God glory in this, that through the great and perfected atonement the whole burden of his sin is blotted out, and, unworthy though he be, he is still beloved by God. Let Him only make it clear that He hath loved us, and then our cares, our sorrows, our objects of ambition, our difficulties, may be all scattered to the winds, for we have all if we have Christ, and we may lose sight of every burden in the eternal, unfathomable, unchangeable, love of God.

But there is a third honour awaiting the faithful soldier, even here. There is nothing more grievous

to such a character than that he should fall, or even stumble, in the hour of trial ; and to him who knows he has but little strength, there are few promises more precious than those which assure him of preservation. The inmost desire of his soul is, that he may be kept, and presented blameless at the coming of his Lord. Now, this is the promise of our Lord to the faithful Philadelphians. In verse 10 he says—"Because thou has kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth." This may refer to the persecution under Trajan, during which, in the most remarkable manner, the Philadelphian Church was spared. Or, it may refer to the tribulation of the latter days, "the tribulation, the great one," described in Rev. vii. 14 ; that time of fearful trial so often predicted as the great precursor of the glorious appearing. The description seems to apply to this more clearly than to any thing limited in its extent, and, if it does, we must, of course, apply the text as referring to the Philadelphian character, whenever, and wherever that character shall be found. But, to those in the latter days must it belong especially, and, if we are at the present time on the confines of the great tribulation, then it must follow that there never yet has been a period when it should be read with

so intense an interest by the followers of the Lamb. "I will keep thee from the hour of temptation," are the words of the Faithful Promiser. He does not say how ; He gives no account of His plan ; but He simply gives the promise, and that promise is enough. He may do it by breaking down the earthly tabernacle, and carrying the ransomed spirit to repose in His own love, while the conflict rages below. He may do it by the rapture of His saints, by separating them even in the flesh from the world with which they now associate ; or He may do it by nerving the heart, and increasing the faith ; by arming for the conflict, and upholding them in the midst of it ; by letting them pass through the great tribulation, but by so upholding them in His own love that they shall come out more than conquerors ; by permitting them like the three young men, to be cast into the furnace, but by holding back the flame, so that, although heated seven times, it shall never kindle on them ; by suffering them to be tried with the rest of men, but so sustaining them by grace that "the trial of their faith shall be much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, and be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Brethren, the heart shrinks from the thought of the great tribulation, for the spirit often fails, even under our pre-

sent burdens ; but, surely, if so upheld, the weakest need not fear. To be kept in the right hand of the Lord Himself, to repose in perfect safety in His own everlasting arms ; to be held fast even unto the end, by the free grace of Him that is holy, Him that is true ; to be so kept is such an honour, such a privilege, such an unspeakable joy and blessing, that for the sake of the preservation we may welcome the danger, and may count it one of the highest honours to be enabled to pass through even the great tribulation, being preserved throughout by His Spirit, and finally, presented as more than conquerors before His throne.

II. And now we may pass on to the second class of honours, viz., those to be given to the conqueror at the coming of the Lord. Of these, *the crown* stands foremost. Behold, I come quickly : hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

With reference to this crown, it is important to observe that it is the crown of victory, and not of royalty. There are two kinds of crowns mentioned in Scripture, the diadem worn by Eastern monarchs, and the laurel wreath, the badge of the triumphant conqueror. The crown here mentioned is the latter, and corresponds with that other symbol of victory, the palm, which is in the hands of

the great multitude now gathered before the throne, of whom it was said, "They were clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." It is the emblem of triumph, and it implies conflict, for there is no victory where there is no struggle, nor any triumph if there is no foe.

But the language of the text appears to open another truth, for it teaches that the crown was already theirs. The hour of great temptation was yet to be passed ; and their Lord had not yet made it plain before men that He loved them ; but even then He spoke of the crown as their own. " Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take *thy* crown." The language of the apostle Paul was of the same character. While still a living man he spoke of his crown as already laid up for him by the Lord. " Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me in that day, and not to me only, but to all them also that love His appearing." Now, what a noble aspect does this give to the believer's holy progress ! He runs, but it is not uncertainly ; he fights, but not as one that beateth the air. His crown is his already, given to him by the rich grace of his blessed Saviour ; laid up in His keeping, far beyond the reach of this world's conflicts. And the hand that now holds

it will soon appear to present it, and to welcome the conqueror to the joys and honours of his Redeemer's triumph.

The pillar. The next promise is—"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out."* The two ideas most clearly conveyed by the imagery appear to be nearness to God, and perpetuity. Nearness to God, for it is in the temple where the conqueror is to abide. And what is this temple? In chapter xxi. 22, we read that there is to be no temple in the New Jerusalem, *i. e.*, no material fabric. But yet there is to be a temple, "for the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple thereof." This is the temple, then, in which the conqueror is to be a pillar, and, therefore, he must enjoy the most intimate oneness with God Himself. There will be no more hindrance to communion, for he will abide in Christ, and Christ in him. He will enjoy the fulfilment of the prayer of his Lord, "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they all may be one in us."

Besides this, there will be perpetuity, for he shall be a pillar, and "shall go no more out;" not a visitor, a worshipper, going and returning, but a

* There appears to be here an allusion to the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which were erected in the porch of Solomon's temple.

pillar abiding always. Still less shall he be like the two pillars in the temple, which were finally carried off to Babylon. The pillar in the temple of God will remain there fixed for eternity. Travellers tell us that there is now at Philadelphia one remarkable pillar, which stands unshaken, though the building of which it once formed part is fallen to ruin. If so, it is an emblem of the abiding character of this promise. But yet, like all other imagery, it fails, for the temple of which the conqueror is a pillar, is one that can never fall to ruin. The heavens may be rolled up as a scroll, and the whole great earth disappear before the presence of God. But this temple is for ever, and the believer shall never quit it. He shall go no more out for all eternity; not a care shall ever disturb his peace; not a fear shall ever cross that threshold; he will never go forth again to the world's sins, or the world's troubles; he will be sheltered for eternity in the everlasting love of God.

The names. One writer remarks that the pillar must be a monumental pillar, because the temple needs no support, and it is only natural that the believer should be preserved as a standing monument of the grace of God. On such a monumental column we should expect the inscription of certain names. Now in all such cases the name of the commemorated conqueror is generally the most con-

spicuous; but in this case it is omitted altogether. There is no allusion to the name of Him that has overcome. That name appeared in the book of life, for that book gave the record of the saving grace of the Lamb of God. But as the victory was not the soldier's own, so neither must be the honour, and his own name disappears from the monument. But there are three others inscribed. There is first the name of the Father. "I will write upon him the name of My God" (Rev. xiv. 1). Observe the close connection between the days of conflict and those of triumph. When the faithful soldier stood on Mount Zion as the follower of the Lamb, and ready to follow Him whithersoever He went, he was distinguished by this sacred badge, that the Father's name was written on his forehead. So now that the victory is complete, and the eternal rest is begun, the same holy name still marks the conqueror, and remains conspicuous within the temple; as much as to shew that it was the Father's love that called him, the Father's grace that redeemed him, the Father's purpose that planned salvation for him, the Father's word that guided and encouraged him, the Father's power that made him conquer, and the Father's everlasting love in which he reposes for an eternity of joy.

The second name is that of the New Jerusalem.

have no desire for a change. The name of Jesus has oftentimes brought joy to the contrite heart ; and we have learned to enter into the spirit of the hymn—

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,

In a believer's ear.

And if ever we be pillars in the temple of our God, the name of Jesus is the one, above all others, which we should select for the inscription. Nor need we understand a change, for it is one of the features of the kingdom that in it He makes all things new. Jerusalem is new, the heavens and the earth are new, the wine is new, the song is new, all joys are new ; for throughout eternity there is an unending freshness in their character. So we cannot wonder if the name of Jesus should be described as new likewise, for what is there in all the blessings of the kingdom which will present itself with such perpetual freshness to the thankful heart of the rejoicing conqueror ? In His name the guilty sinner has been justified from all his sin. His name, through faith in His name, has made him whole from sin's power. In His name has the warring believer pleased with God ; in His name have prayers without number gone up before the throne and have prevailed. His name has cheered us in discouragement, comforted us in sorrow, accused us from indifference, and will, we

“ I will write upon him . . . the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God.” This inscription appears to be intended to perpetuate his citizenship. Like Abraham of old, he had run his course, “ looking for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” He had declared plainly that he sought a country, and so had become a faithful soldier; being unmindful of that from whence he came out. And the bright hope that cheered his progress must not be forgotten when the crown is won. So it too must be engraved upon the pillar; and, being there, it seems to convey the thought,—Here is the man that lived above the world, that knew himself to be a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, that had no thought of this world as his home, no intention of looking back, but kept his eye fixed on the bright prospect of the New Jerusalem; so that now he is not merely within the city, but nearer even than that—a pillar within the temple of his God.

The third name is that of Christ Himself, for He is the speaker throughout these epistles, and He concludes the promise by saying, “ I will write upon him My new name.” It is difficult to know exactly what is meant by the newness here described. If we might express a wish on such a subject, we should almost venture to say, that we

have no desire for a change. The name of Jesus has oftentimes brought joy to the contrite heart ; and we have learned to enter into the spirit of the hymn—

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,
In a believer's ear,

And if ever we be pillars in the temple of our God, the name of Jesus is the one, above all others, which we should select for the inscription. Nor need we understand a change, for it is one of the features of the kingdom that in it He makes all things new. Jerusalem is new, the heavens and the earth are new, the wine is new, the song is new, all joys are new ; for throughout eternity there is an unfading freshness in their character. So we cannot wonder if the name of Jesus should be described as new likewise, for what is there in all the blessings of the kingdom which will present itself with such perpetual freshness to the thankful heart of the rejoicing conqueror ? In His name the guilty sinner has been justified from all his sin. His name, through faith in His name, has made him whole from sin's power. In His name has the wrestling believer pleaded with God ; in His name have prayers without number gone up before the throne and have prevailed. His name has cheered us in discouragement, comforted us in sorrow, aroused us from indifference, and will, we

trust, bear us up through the last great conflict with the last great foe; and what name so appropriate to be inscribed upon the pillar in the temple of God? There let it stand in legible characters, and let it there teach us this truth—this man was once a poor, wretched, guilty, ruined sinner; fit only to be an outcast for ever; but here he is a pillar in the temple of God, and to the full redemption, the free grace, the unmerited fidelity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to that alone, does he owe the change.

And now, brethren, there is one important question, upon which I am anxious for a decision before we quit this house of God, and that is, shall we go home this night resolved in God's name to be the faithful soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ, or shall we be satisfied henceforth with a timid, hollow, inconsistent, and wavering profession? There are temptations of all kinds in all directions; there is the world to attract, and false doctrine to deceive: there are allurements for all ages and all classes, for the young, for the old, for the rich, for the poor; for the laity and for the clergy; there are allurements, seductive allurements for us all: but there is one simple way of life; there is the one well-defined path for the child of God. Shall we walk in it or shall we not? There is the leader and commander of God's people. Shall we follow

Him or shall we not? There is God's word. Shall we keep it or shall we not? There is the name of Jesus. Shall we exalt or deny it? There is the hour of temptation. Shall we be carried down by the tide, or shall we cast ourselves on Him who can bear us through triumphantly and present us uninjured before the throne of His own glory? Some perhaps are still halting between two opinions, still wavering, still vascillating between Christ and the world. Oh, brethren, where is your fidelity? Where is your hope? Where is your allegiance to Christ? Where is your sense of gratitude for His love? Where is your response to His free offer of everlasting pardon through the cleansing power of His own most precious blood? Is this the only return you can make for such a pardon?—the only response to such a promise? But I trust I am speaking to many, the deep desire of whose heart it is to be faithful followers of the Lamb. If so, remember the word of exhortation, "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown." You may have indeed but little strength. Perhaps you are very poor and very ignorant. Perhaps you have but little faith, and feel yourself to be like a reed shaken by the wind. But with all your feebleness you have Christ, and He is omnipotent; you have His right hand to hold you up, and it can keep you through the hour of

temptation; and you have your crown laid up for you with Him, and He will not permit the foe to wrest it from His hand. Hold that fast then which thou hast. The time may not be long—the struggle may soon end; for He has said, “I come quickly.” Press on then with vigour. Hasten forward by the open door to do His work. Keep your eye fixed on His beckoning hand; repose on His word, and the day will come, perhaps very soon, when He will make it plain, not merely to the world, but to your own feeble, doubting, trembling heart, that He hath loved you—loved you from eternity, and loves you even now. Then there will be no cloud, no tear, no fear, no sin, no war, no widowhood, no temptation; no failure of faith, but you shall be a pillar in the temple of God, you shall go no more out, you shall abide there for all eternity, a glorified believer, an everlasting monument of the rich grace and the mighty power of the Lord Jesus Christ your Saviour.

LECTURE XI.

THE SAVIOUR'S THRONE.

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REVELATION III. 21.

“ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

THE power of that lively hope, unto which the true believer hath been begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” is the influence chiefly relied upon in the New Testament, through the ceaseless conflict that goes on between the flesh and the Spirit, whereby he is ultimately to appear more than conqueror, and the victory to be established, “ that overcometh the world.” Hope embraces and anticipates the promises of God, which are yea, and amen, in Jesus Christ,

who is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." It has to do altogether with things future and unseen: "for that which is seen is not hope." By means of it a counteracting influence is opposed to those every-day solicitings that earth so largely furnishes. It is the offspring of patience, and the parent of holiness and peace; for, every one that hath "Hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It gives glory to God by believing all His Word. It is a witness of the Spirit, since men "abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost." It rests upon faith, which is the substance and evidence of things hoped for—and love springs up between them, and perfects the ideal of a true Christian.

To this mighty and marvellous principle the appeal is altogether made in those very emphatic words selected for our consideration this evening,—"To him that overcometh,"—implying that a season of trial, an ordeal of conflict awaited them, during which their fidelity should be sorely tested—their integrity "sifted as wheat"—during which, opportunity would be afforded of putting into practice the lesson that the grace of God had taught them, of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and of fulfilling the vows they undertook when they enlisted as soldiers of Christ, to take up their cross, to deny themselves, and simply to follow Him. All this involved difficulty, and required

patience; so that a motive at once powerful and attractive must be supplied, for the production of such a result—a motive mighty enough to overbear the influences by which it was sure, at once, to be opposed, and, withal, attractive enough and animating, to sustain the heart, and to dispel the gloom of a contest so dispiriting and prolonged. This motive is supplied in the promise of the Saviour, to him that overcometh, of sitting down with Him on His throne. This promise, faith, believes, and hope looks for, at the “glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Thus is the Christian warrior upheld and cheered; in patience possessing his soul, he fights the “good fight of faith,” being persuaded that *his* is the hope that maketh not ashamed, that he shall yet be “more than conqueror, through Him that loved him,” and shall sit down with the Saviour on the Saviour’s throne, even, saith He, “as I am set down with My Father on His throne.”

Our text, to which a nearer consideration is now invited, presents to us three very salient points, viz., *a conflict to be endured, a victory to be won, and a reward to be enjoyed.* The conflict is going on at this moment, with every one of us. We have our trials and reverses, as well as our hopes and encouragements. We must, while in the flesh,

continue to fight the good fight of faith, to lay hold upon eternal life. The enemy never ceases, he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking to rob us of our crown : and the victory cannot be said to be won until we have finished our course. Then, afterwards, they that are Christ's shall receive their reward at His coming, which He hath promised, "Behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me." These who are thus fighting now, and for whom the reward is prepared, are differently, but significantly described in different contexts ; in one place they are spoken of as they who "love His appearing," in another as they who "look for Him." In our text, and in the address to each of the Churches, the designation made use of is "Him that overcometh." And the reward itself, also, is variously designated ; at one time it is called a crown of righteousness, at another a "crown of life," and, again, a crown of glory that fadeth not away, to be contended for now—to be securely won when the conflict is over—to be received and enjoyed at "the appearing of Jesus Christ." In our text the reward is called "to sit down with the Saviour on His throne:" and it requires all the confident expectation of faith, sustaining the buoyant energy of a "lively hope," to maintain the Christian through this mighty conflict against sin, the world, and the

devil, that he may continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end. Neither is the importance of this principle, or the magnitude of this conflict, overlooked in our text; for, what is matter of fact is introduced to illustrate and to strengthen what is simply matter of faith. Jesus did engage in the conflict; Jesus hath overcome, and is set down on the throne of God, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. This great fact is presented to us in some sort as the type of that which is promised to us; "the thing that hath been" in some measure shadowing forth "the thing that shall be," when the time of promised "restitution" shall have arrived; when that kingdom shall be established for whose advent we are taught to pray daily, and which "shall never be destroyed;" when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, "and them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him." These, together with those faithful and wise servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; these are they who shall sit down with the Saviour, God and King, on His throne, who shall live and reign with Him. This is the first resurrection. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

Having thus sketched, in outline, the great truths presented to us in our text, we will proceed to consider them separately, and, taking the order of sequence for our guide, we will examine *first* that which has taken place already; *next* in order is that which is now in progress; and, *lastly*, that which is promised, when He shall come, "whose right it is, and to whom it shall be given." Accordingly, our subject ranges itself under these three divisions:—

First—THE SAVIOUR WHO HATH OVERCOME, SET DOWN WITH HIS FATHER ON HIS FATHER'S THRONE.

Secondly—THE CHRISTIAN ON THE BATTLE-FIELD, ANIMATED WITH THE HOPE OF OVERCOMING AT LAST.

Thirdly—THE PROMISES FULFILLED; THE SAVIOUR RETURNED; THE CHRISTIAN VICTORIOUS, SITTING DOWN WITH HIM ON HIS THRONE.

And, Oh! gracious God, let Thy love be shed abroad in each heart of those now before Thee, by the Holy Ghost largely given unto us; that I may speak after the mind of Christ, and that the word thus spoken may be accompanied with power, ministering to us peace, and joy, and hope, for Jesus Christ's name sake. Amen.

First—THE SAVIOUR WHO HATH OVERCOME, SET DOWN WITH THE FATHER ON HIS THRONE.

The Lord Jesus Christ, "the Breaker," who was to come up to bruise the serpent's head, did at length appear in the fulness of God's appointed time. He took manhood into God, and so was made perfect through sufferings. In man's nature, and in the power of the Spirit, given without measure to that nature, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Had He not engaged in the conflict, the victory could not have been won. In the successive details of His mysteriously eventful life, He carefully fulfilled all righteousness. By His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. From Bethlehem to Calvary "He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," enduring the bruising of His heel, while He bruised the head of His enemy, through death destroying him that had the power of death, for us men, and for our salvation. He expired in agony upon the accursed tree, his lifeless body was buried, and laid in the new tomb by Joseph of Arimathea ; from whence He was raised again the third day, and declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, as "the first fruits of them that slept." Having glorified His Father on earth, and having finished the work which He gave Him to do, He ascended in glorified humanity, leading

captivity captive, to receive gifts for men. And, as his sorrowing disciples stood in amazement upon the Mount of Olives, looking steadfastly toward heaven, while the clouds received Him out of their sight, the hosts of heaven made ready to receive the returning conqueror, and sang with joyous acclaim, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in." So then, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God, having all power given unto Him, in heaven and in earth, "whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution." After which He will come again, and His reward with Him, and His saints with Him: then shall His promises be gloriously fulfilled; amongst them, that, now under review, the sitting down of the conquering Christian upon his Redeemer's throne, as the Redeemer Himself, who hath already conquered, hath sat down upon his Father's throne.

It is desirable we should have as clear a notion as may be arrived at, of what is meant by the Redeemer's sitting on His Father's throne, were it but to help in giving distinctness to the hope of sitting down, by and by, ourselves, when the conflict is over, and the victory won, with the Redeemer on His throne. This, indeed, is the main point presented in our subject, "*The Saviour's Throne*,"

and in the investigation of it, we have no information to receive except from His own revealed Word, on guide to follow, except the light from heaven. We shall see then—

First. The evidence for the fact affirmed, that Jesus is set down with His Father on His throne, after which we shall be in a better condition to seek, *in the next place*, what is the meaning of that very striking and significant, but still, obviously symbolical, language, the sitting down upon His throne, either of the Redeemer with the Father, or, of the Christian, with the Redeemer.

The fact of our blessed Lord's ascension into heaven, and of His session on the right hand of the Father, is as clearly revealed as any other fact in His carefully recorded life. St. Mark relates (xvi. 19), "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." To the same effect also St. Luke, both in the last chapter of his gospel, and in the opening of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, declares, that "He was carried up into heaven and a cloud received Him out of their sight:" which is but a fulfilment of what He had foretold Himself, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before," and again, when He commanded Mary to say to His

brethren (John xx. 17), "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God." This is the great fact which enables St. Paul to bring together both the prophecy and its fulfilment. Quoting from the sixty-eighth Psalm in the Epistle to the Ephesians (iv. 8, 9, 10), he says, "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that He might fill all things:" as also, commenting upon the eighth Psalm (in Heb. ii.), he adds, "But now we see not yet, all things put under Him, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." Not only so, but instances abound wherein this mighty truth is used to strengthen the confidence, and to brighten the hope of the Christian during his conflict. Who, but feels the force of the spirit-stirring words, "It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who maketh intercession for us?" (Rom. viii. 34), or that cannot find comfort in the assurance, "Christ is entered into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us, wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by Him" (Heb. ix. 24; vii. 25). In another part of this epistle the expression is, "Jesus is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," or, "of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3; xii. 2). Expres-

sions equivalent to that brought before us in our text, "I am set down with My Father on His throne."

The purpose, and the continuance of that session, we collect from other portions of the inspired volume. In the 110th Psalm, David, as quoted by our Lord, in controversy with the Pharisees, says, "The Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool," which is afterwards paraphrased by St. Paul, "from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Matt. xxii. 44; Heb. x. 13). St. Peter also adds (Acts iii. 21), "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." From these and similar passages, we may gather plainly, the period and the object of the Saviour's sitting with the Father on the Father's throne. All power is given to Him in heaven and in earth, and, in a certain sense, He rules even now in the midst of His enemies. When we speak of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, we allude to His antecedent and eternal glory, that of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. When we speak of Him as now sitting down with the Father on the Father's throne, we mean His glory as Mediator, to which God also

has highly exalted Him, in glorified humanity, the reward of His finished work, wherewith He glorified the Father on the earth (Phil. ii. 9; John xvii. 4, 5), and for which the Father now glorifies Him with His own self, making Him the partner of His throne, and placing Him at His right hand. The symbolical expressions, "throne," and, "right hand," are well calculated to convey to us, the exceeding dignity of Him, who is "the image of the invisible God," "in whom all things consist," "who is the Head of the body the Church," who in all things hath the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 15, 18), together with the "exceeding greatness of the power that He exercises far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. i. 19, 21). The term, "throne," is obviously symbolical of royalty and dominion, while "right hand," expresses honour and strength. The risen and ascended Redeemer, then, sitting on the Father's throne, on the right hand of the Majesty on high, plainly intimates to us, that He, who is Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God, is now the Father's executive in the administration of all things in heaven and earth, both in providence and in grace. He is now invisible, apprehensible only to faith, ruling above, out of our sight. But when the

time of promised restitution shall have arrived, then He will come again, visibly, openly, "in like manner as He was seen to go away," in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke ix. 26). This is, "the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28), foreshadowed upon the mount of transfiguration to His chosen disciples, and afterwards called by one of them "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter i. 16). This is the glory that is yet to be revealed: this is the Saviour's throne, upon which His victorious followers shall sit down with Him. The period of His absence is the time of the Church's widowhood. He is gone to receive a kingdom and to return. This kingdom He will share with His longing, loving bride, whose fidelity, meanwhile, He puts to the test, and, whose patience He exercises during the continuance of His long-suffering. For His absence, so fraught with mourning and trial to His faithful Church, is but long-suffering mercy to a perishing world, from Him who willeth not that "any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter iii. 9). During all this period, the gospel is being preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Peter i. 12)—"a remnant is being saved from outcast Israel, according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 5), "and a people is being

taken out of the Gentiles for His name" (Acts xv. 14). Many things however occur, that are perplexing to sight, and hard to be endured, but we walk by faith, and this tells us, that all things (without any exception) are working together for good, that we shall know hereafter what we do not understand now. "The Lord is at hand," is full of comfort and hope under our present trial. "Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer," is the picture of a Christian in the house of his pilgrimage." But this runs on to my next division—

II. "THE CHRISTIAN ON THE BATTLE-FIELD ANIMATED WITH THE HOPE OF OVERCOMING AT LAST." The Christian's conflict in this world is both severe and ceaseless—severe, because the enemy is mighty and malignant—ceaseless, because he is always on the alert, and only intermits his assaults to return to them with renewed vigour. On the other hand, the most advanced of us needs constant reminding to be "sober and vigilant," for however willing the spirit may be, the flesh lusteth against it, and is weak withal, to resist. Yet the battle must be fought and the victory must be won, else there can be no bright reward "to him that overcometh." Herein, my brethren, is the trial and patience of the saints. Here, is required all the power of faith and hope, throughout those

exquisite and impalpable struggles, the full bitterness of which, the heart only to itself knoweth, while it contendeth from day to day against its subtle and relentless persecutors. Under this head is spread before us the whole field of Christian experience. Here, we stand in need of that full assurance of faith, which believes that the Lord reigneth and therefore it must be well, since He hath done it—and also of the full energy of that lively hope, that can anticipate for itself that “crown of righteousness” which is promised and secured to all “them that love His appearing.” Oh, he knows but little of His own heart, and is sadly ignorant of Satan’s devices, who cannot individualize what I have said, and associate it with some passage or passages in his own consciousness. And, when you are sorely pressed, when the flood of temptation is running high, and when the tide of circumstances hath set in strongly against you, is there not comfort and strength in the conviction, that there is then, One sitting with the Father on His throne, praying that your faith fail not? Oh, what would you exchange for the hope, the anchor of the soul “sure and steadfast” cast within the veil, by clinging to which, your bark though shattered, may still ride out the midnight storm, and prove itself in the morning a conqueror, to His praise who loved you? I am not now speaking

of the grosser forms under which worldly ambition, or secret pride, or carnal desire, do vex and harrass the soul of the believer. Though these, are both too formidable in themselves, and too momentous in their consequences to be overlooked—I am now speaking more directly with reference to the hidden man of the heart, the little world within the breast of each of us, full of its hopes and fears, its difficulties and desires, the struggles of that wayward spirit within us, to rule which, the wise man pronounces a greater victory than to take a city (Prov. xi. 32). It is here, I believe, the Christian meets his chief trials and difficulties, and in proportion as he grows in grace and in knowledge, his sensibilities become more refined, and his struggle, in consequence, more painful. That this is the case might be established in more ways than one, but this consideration may suffice to illustrate it to us. Until a man surrenders himself wholly to the service of God, he is a stranger altogether to the pain and the struggle of which we are now speaking. He swims down with the current, and never feels or cares how rapid or how powerful it is. He makes provision for the flesh to fulfil its desires. His only effort is to supply them, and his only disappointment is from their unsatisfying character when he hath compassed his object. This is as much true of him whose worldliness is of a refined

and intellectual character, as of his more epicurean brother, who "works all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. iv. 19). Temptation, as such, in neither of its appalling forms, assails him, neither as a bitter trial to be patiently endured, nor as a sinful inclination to be steadfastly resisted. He is a stranger to the latter altogether, for he yields at once, and the temptation is no more. Nor does the real true severity of trial endured for Christ, and through Christ, press upon such, inasmuch as he has not Christ in his thoughts, and therefore submits to no avoidable self-denial for His sake. But, let the grace of God bring salvation to such a person, and immediately his trial and difficulty commences. The great difference is, he is now converted, his face is set towards God, and not away from Him as before, he is now striving against the tide, and feels the strength of that which was disregarded before, so long as he drifted carelessly with it down the stream. He finds that it is not so easy a thing to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, as he found it before to yield to and indulge in them, and he discovers that each step in the life of the new creature, who seeks to walk "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," is so much ground to be recovered from the enemy, to be won by persevering effort, and to be retained by patient waiting and by watchful

prayer. I am now speaking only of the *trials* which beset the path of the sincere believer; there is a bright obverse also to this picture—the hope which our text presents, but with this I am not just now concerned. My object is to explain the admitted fact, that, as at the moment when a man becomes truly converted to God, and commences to live his life in the flesh by faith of the Son of God, he exposes himself to a class and character of assaults, from the world, the flesh and the devil, from which he was all but free before; so likewise, in his further course onward and upward, as his love abounds, as his knowledge becomes deeper, and his experience more intense, his sensibility also is quickened, the agony of mental conflict is felt more acutely, and the attendant consciousness more painful and more humbling, as the review of each day's shortcomings saddens his reflections, and he feels that he has been overtaken by temptation and subdued by sin. For such a state of things we expect to find in the covenant of grace a remedy provided, both suitable and sufficient—nor are we disappointed. The great motive the gospel at once supplies is the coming of the Lord, “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus ii. 13): and further, as we advance into the conflict, the reward held out to

him that overcometh is, that "he shall sit down with his Saviour on His throne, even as He is set down with the Father on His throne."

It is a wicked device of the enemy, whereby he represents the "coming of the Saviour in His kingdom" as a point of secondary importance, being at best a matter only of curious inquiry, and not, as it is, powerfully practical, and deeply experimental. I do not say that, unless a man believes it in its integrity, he cannot be saved. But I do say, that the man who desires to receive the truth in the love of it, and yet refuses to accept what is obviously conveyed in the words, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11), and what is further confirmed by the words of our Lord Himself afterwards, "Behold, I come quickly," and by the way in which the beloved disciple received them. "Even so come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 26)—whoso refuses, I say, to receive this in all its blessed fulness, is content to forego much of what his gracious Master intends for his comfort, and to live far behind the bright hope that the coming of Christ in glory is able to shed on his path.

There is not a truth in the Bible that comes so point-blank to meet the trials and difficulties of the Christian as this before us. When our Lord

told His disciples, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," and cheered them to meet it with, "I have overcome the world," did not His words derive force and meaning from what He said before, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also?" No other principle is more frequently or more confidently appealed to, for the comfort and guidance of the Christian throughout his conflict, than the blessed hope of the glorious issue that awaits him. When the sweet singer of Israel comforts himself under some sore trial with the assurance, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory" (Ps. lxxiii. 24); and in another connection, when He says, "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). Are we not warranted, with the 110th Psalm before us, in understanding these words with reference to a glory yet to be revealed, and in associating its fulness with our Lord's appearance? It is after He had said, "I will behold thy face in righteousness;" that He adds, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness" (Ps. xvii. 15). Hear the rapturous words of the great prophet Isaiah (xxv. 9), "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for

Him, we will be glad, and rejoice in His salvation." St. Paul, in a context familiar to us all, fixes the period for the advent of "that day;" saying, "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory;" namely, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality (1 Cor. xv. 54). In fact, in the application of these words to ourselves, we are exhorted to endure hardships, to persevere, to quit us like men and to be strong; knowing both, that the victory is secure, and the reward certain to him that overcometh. The time moreover is clearly determined by the coming of the Lord, which is the bright point that illuminates every promise, as St. Paul also in another place applies a prophecy of Habakkuk (Heb. x. 37), "For yet a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry," for the instruction and encouragement of the just that live by faith, and who believe to the saving of the soul.

If I have dwelt, even to a tedious length, upon this branch of my subject, let it be remembered, that upon a point of such magnitude, and one that, properly understood, blends itself with the whole tissue of the Christian's life in the flesh, the evidence ought to be clear and convincing beyond possibility of doubt, otherwise it cannot produce the

results expected from it. We should be firmly persuaded that the Lord Jesus will return, having received His kingdom, to the delight of His followers, and to the discomfiture of His enemies. We should see clearly that this great fact is constantly appealed to in Holy Scripture, as the mighty motive to restrain us from every thing forbidden, and to impel us to every thing lovely and of good report, and we should be able to recognize in the history of our own experience, as Christians seeking to do God's will on earth, some traces of the power of this principle acting on us, and producing fruit. The pains I have been at, in pointing out to you the testimony of Scripture on this point, or the demand made upon your attention is by no means disproportioned to the magnitude and importance of the subject itself. While the concurrent testimony of more passages than one of Holy Writ to the same central fact, is in itself sufficient guarantee for the soundness of interpretation whereby we have concluded of the peace and blessedness to be realized to His expectant people, at the coming in glory of Him who has already redeemed them from all iniquity, and made them kings and priests to God and His Father. One passage from Scripture, when rightly understood and fairly applied, carries conviction and authority along with it as well as a thousand.

But, besides, that, from the very structure of the inspired word, we are prepared to find each fundamental doctrine supported by more testimonies than one; there is this advantage also, arising from the collation of several passages in support of the same leading truth—namely, that the objections of a gainsayer may more easily be met, who while he might object to our use of any single passage if it stood alone, cannot with equal shew of fairness object to us as misinterpreting and misapplying the remainder, “I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.”

Before I pass to the last head of my discourse, I must appeal somewhat to the internal consciousness of each of you, whether in your secret trials and temptations you have not been helped both as to the view you take of them, and in the effort you make to overcome them, by running on in faith and hope to the bright reward that awaits you in the day of the Lord Jesus. I will suppose one or two cases, that I am sure, with some modification, may be adapted to the experience of every one amongst us. Suppose a man assailed by the wicked suggestions of Satan, either by unholy desires, by unbelieving doubts, or by enchanting visions of the kingdoms of this world and of the glory of them. Whither is he to betake him

for refuge from the violence and subtlety of his assailant? St. Paul instructs him even to glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope,—the hope that maketh not ashamed. Now I ask, is not this hope rendered brighter and more distinct if we can associate it with “Christ formed in you the hope of glory,” and can look forward to a sure time, when He shall come and His reward with Him, when we too shall partake with Him in “the joy of our Lord?” St. James also bids us count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations, knowing this that the trial of your faith worketh patience; and again, “Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.” St. Peter as well, comforting the scattered strangers during the heaviness of manifold temptations, exhorts them to patience under their trial, that it may be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. When the other class of trials falls heavily upon the Christian in the shape of suffering, disappointment, bereavement, loss; when all things earthly appear against him, the cloud is dispelled, and the bow is seen in the cloud, when he realizes his position as of a soldier of Christ, placed, it may be, in the very trenches, but yet sure that the victory must

be his at last ; that he must partake in the triumph of his great Captain, and sit down with Him in His throne, at His appearance and kingdom.

It is the assured belief in the coming again in glory and in majesty of Him that "loved us and gave Himself for us," that gives point and power to all that we expect from Him. The Christian is described as longing, looking, waiting, hasting unto the day of the Lord Jesus. It is he only who has experienced this in his season of trial and conflict that can understand its power, and appreciate its comfort. When a humble Christian is tried even amongst his own brethren ; when he is misunderstood, or misrepresented, or both ; when he meets harshness where he expected sympathy ; when his trial may be of that minute and secret nature, that he cannot impart it even to his nearest friend ; when his seeking explanation or redress might perhaps occasion scandal to the Church, or put a stumbling-block in the way of the weak ; oh, it is hard to be patient under these and similar circumstances, of which the course of this fallen world affords, no doubt, instances in abundance. Oh, my dear brethren, should such in any degree, be, at any time, the case with any of you, learn to commit yourselves to Him that judgeth righteously, who knows the entire,

and the truth, more fully than you could reveal it. Look to Him for patience, and while you wait, your strength will be renewed. Let it be your first care, by no act or word, to cast discredit upon your holy profession, nor to give the enemy an occasion to blaspheme. Remember always that the heaviest thing laid to your charge "falsely for His sake" is light in comparison with the least of the sins of which you are conscious, and that the greatest sufferings you may have been exposed to in consequence, are less than the lightest sentence you would pass on yourself as a transgressor before God. Thus shall you in patience possess your souls. Love to your offending brother will take place of anger or enmity in your heart; and your prayer must certainly return into your own bosom. This lesson, to be sure, the Gospel teaches us under every form and interpretation of it; but I will ask, if it is not deepened in its character, and rendered more intense in its application, when it is clearly associated with such promises as, "If we suffer we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. ii. 12): "To him that overcometh I will give to sit with me on my throne?" I appeal to you that are persuaded of the truth of the doctrine, whether I have exaggerated the power and comfort of it. To you only can such

appeal be made, for it is plainly impossible that any principle can be productive of practical result until it is first fully felt to be true.

I proceed, lastly, in connection with this second head of my subject to produce a few instances of the manner in which the coming of the Lord is asserted and employed in Scripture, for the accomplishment of God's will in us, namely, our sanctification and victory over the world. I do not hesitate to affirm that this great truth of our Lord's coming will be found more frequently made use of in the inspired epistles than any other, even of co-ordinate magnitude. Upon the fact itself, that He will come again, we are all of us agreed. The difference arises, however, as to the manner and time of His appearing. We maintain, that He will so come in like manner as He was seen to go away, and that the time and the season which the Father hath put in His own power, will be that of destruction to his enemies by the brightness of that coming, and of inauguration of that blessed millennium of peace and holiness secured to them that "were beheaded for the witness of Jesus; and who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, neither received his mark on their forehead nor in their hands" (Rev. xx. 4). Then shall that kingdom be openly set up, which shall never be destroyed, and for which we pray daily,

"Thy kingdom come." In that day of promised "regeneration" shall His faithful followers receive their reward, and sit down with Him on His throne, even as He is set down with the Father on His throne" (Matt. xviii. 28).

This view altogether agrees with the use made by the apostles of this precious truth, and with their mode of using it. It is asserted and it is assumed. It is taken for granted, and it is proved. It gives tenderness to the earnest prayer of St. Paul's heart for the Philippians and Thessalonians, that their love may abound yet more and more, that they may be sincere and without offence *till the day of Christ*, or, "that their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Phil. i. 9, 10; 1 Thes. v. 23). It gives force to exhortation: "Let your moderation be known unto all men; *the Lord is at hand*," saith one apostle (Phil. iv. 5). "Hope to the end (saith another), for the grace that is to be brought unto God, *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet. i. 13): and sternness to reproof, "Therefore judge nothing before the time *until the Lord come*" (1 Cor. iv. 5). It gives life to hope, and energy to active godliness: "*When He shall appear* we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is; and every one that hath this hope in

Him purifieth himself even as He is pure :” and again, “The grace of God teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope *and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*” (1 John iii. 23 ; Titus ii. 11, 14). It encourages the minister to be faithful : “Blessed is that servant whom *the Lord when He cometh shall find so doing* :” “When *the chief Shepherd shall appear*, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (Matt. xxiv. 46 ; 1 Peter v. 4) : and the people to be patient : “Be patient therefore, brethren, *unto the coming of the Lord*. . . . Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for *the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*” (James v. 7, 8). And thus might we traverse the whole field of Christian experience without discovering one point that had not been reached by the power of this principle commended to us in our text. Oh ! yes, while the Christian is as yet on the battle-field, with the tide of conflict raging fiercely around, there is nothing that can animate him in comparison with the assured hope that the victory must be his, that he must be more than conqueror through Him that loved him. This sheds a lustre upon the darkest path of his pilgrimage ; it represses every rising murmur, while it fosters and

draws forth every holy desire and fervent longing after God,—the hope ever present to his soul, that the “end is at hand,” that he has but to wait a little longer, that the tide of battle must soon be rolled back in his favour, and, that when he hath overcome, he shall either be brought with his Lord, or caught up to meet Him, to sit with Him on His throne, and to be for ever with the Lord.

III. To this head we come, in the last place, viz., “THE PROMISES FULFILLED: THE SAVIOUR RETURNED: THE VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN SITTING DOWN WITH HIM ON HIS THRONE.” The great difference between the two conditions, of things as they are, and of things as they shall be,—of the Saviour on His Father’s throne, and of the Saviour on His own throne,—and between the mode of administration to which we look forward, and that under which we are living, is, that the one shall be visible, in manifested majesty and in glory revealed, whereas now it is unseen, acting on the true church through faith, and evidencing itself to the world only by its results. Justice and judgment are now assailed and almost overborne, then they shall be triumphant and complete.

The existence of a “kingdom of heaven,” or “kingdom of God,” or “kingdom of Christ,” in the world has never been denied. Alas ! what a dreary position that would be to maintain, and how

fearful the reality, were such the case! "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the beginning and the burden of John the Baptist's preaching, repeated afterwards by our Lord Himself at the commencement of His ministry, and just after His victory over Satan in the wilderness. This is the kingdom of grace : the kingdom of glory is not yet. Under the former we are living now. It has been small in its origin, like the grain of mustard-seed ; slow in its progress, and impalpable in its growth, like the seed cast into the ground ; spiritual in its nature, for it cometh not with observation, dwelling in the heart of the believer in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. But there has been nothing in this kingdom since its first setting up in the days of John the Baptist (Acts x. 37), up to the present moment, commensurate with the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should and shall follow. The subjects of this blessed kingdom are but a little flock—so far from being in the ascendant that they have been all along struggling for very existence, and at this moment, even under most favourable circumstances, the tide of power, of wealth and rank, is clearly against them ; as our Lord Himself said on a very emphatic occasion, "My kingdom is not of this world : now is my kingdom not from hence" (John xviii. 36). Satan is the god of this

world. The things that the world most covets, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but of the world, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John ii. 16; v. 19): so that the conversion of a soul to God by the power of the Holy Ghost is described as, "a deliverance from the power of darkness, and a translation into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. i. 13). The heart of the true believer is the only "throne of the Saviour" yet on earth; there He reigns,—His title, mercy, and His tribute, love.

But this state of things is to last only for an appointed time. The groaning and travailing of creation is not to be for ever. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. viii. 22; xvi. 20). It is promised in the sure word of prophecy, that "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." "Then shall the mystery of God have been finished," and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. ii. 14; Rev. x. 7; xi. 15). This season of peace and glory and blessing shall be ushered in by the lightning flash of the Saviour's return, when He shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,

taking vengeance on them that know not God, and recompensing rest to his troubled followers, who shall then sit down with Him on His throne of peace, and share with Him the sceptre of His righteous kingdom.

Considering the coming of Christ's kingdom in power, sufficiently established by what has gone before, as also its features of visibility, supremacy, and glory, contrasted with its present condition of a spiritual, struggling, and feeble band of followers, and remembering, that while the time and season of its manifestation is put purposely in the Father's own power, our attention is directed to the signs that are to warn His people of its approach, we pass on to that feature presented in our text for the encouragement of His people, whose time must soon come, who shall soon lift up their heads, for their redemption draweth nigh; whose salvation is nearer than when they believed; who may now rejoice for evermore, for they have overcome, and shall "sit down with the Saviour on His throne." To the Scriptures alone we are referred for the confirmation and explanation of this sublime promise. With the book of Daniel this mode of expression first meets us, "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever and ever. . . . Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment

was given to the saints of the Most High : and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom : and the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him " (Dan. vii. 18, 22, 27). Intimations of this are discernible in earlier parts of the inspired volume, *e. g.*, where David writes, " This honour have all His saints " (Ps. cxlix. 9) : and again, Isaiah, " When the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously " (Is. xxiv. 23). The context in both places enables us to identify the language with the promise and the period more distinctly set forth subsequently by the prophet Daniel, and comprehended in the reward held out to him that overcometh, of sitting down with the Saviour on His throne. The first inheritors of this honour are clearly shewn to be the apostles of the Lord, to whom He said, " Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel " (Luke xxii. 28, 30). Two other classes are subsequently mentioned, for

whom share in this honour is reserved, viz., the martyrs for the truth, and the faithful ones in all ages. "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. xx. 4). By reference to these leading passages may many incidental allusions be cleared up and completed; such as, for example, when the Christian church is called a royal priesthood, when we are exhorted to give glory to Him who made us kings and priests to God and His Father, and we shall reign on the earth, and when St. Paul writes, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" and when he writes to Timothy, "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him;" and once again, "The Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xxii. 5).

That this blessed period begins with the coming in glory of Christ at the commencement of the millennium has been, I trust, sufficiently made evident from what has gone before. It is not, however, necessary to suppose that it is to terminate at

the close of that period, especially when so many passages speak of reigning for ever and ever. We must always bear in mind that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is differently spoken of in Scripture as God, and Man, and Mediator, and so there is no real difficulty in the way, arising from "His delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, shall be all in all" (1 Cor. xv. 24—28). Into the details, however, of this kingdom, its subjects, and the manner of it, I do not attempt to enter. It is with a very trembling foot, and hesitating step, I have ventured thus far. At this point the glory of the latter-day bursts with dazzling light upon us. Israel, the dearly beloved of His soul, so long given into the hand of His enemies, now made an eternal excellency, and a joy of many generations (Jer. xii. 7; Isa. lx. 15). The Redeemer come to Zion, to the throne of His father David, to reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. "The fulness of the Gentiles come in." "All Israel saved." "The ransomed of the Lord returned and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of

God ! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." " For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Isa. xxxv. and Rom. xi).

In the last sentence I have touched the leading points of a stupendous and magnificent outline. Into the filling up in detail of which, my dear brethren, I do not attempt to conduct you, because, I freely confess to you, I have need of much more light and knowledge myself upon each of them ; and, as Augustine said of time, " The more I think on it, the less I understand it," nor do I expect that the difficulties will be cleared away, until the glory of the Lord having risen upon Israel, in His light we shall see light. But am I not to receive it, because I cannot thoroughly understand it ? Or, am I not to take comfort to my own soul, and offer encouragement to your souls from the precious promises, and gracious purposes of God, because they involve perplexity to my dim vision, and in their mode of fulfilment are past finding out ? Oh, yes, my dear brethren, let it be enough for us that God hath said it. " If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, should it be marvellous in mine eyes ? saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. viii. 6). The difficulty of performance is all with Him. " Behold He is the

Lord, the God of all flesh. Is any thing too hard for Him?" (Jer. xxxii. 27). O, brethren, let it be our prayer, "Lord, increase our faith; let us not be faithless, but believing." And, as Jesus said unto Martha, he saith to us, "If thou wilt believe thou shalt see the glory of God" (John xi. 40). For this cause, when invited to take a part, with honoured and beloved brethren in this very important course, I did not feel at liberty to forego the privilege of bearing testimony to what I believed and felt myself, of the comfort and strength, the confidence and support, that are bound up in the assured hope of glory, yet to be revealed; and how fully all is individualized and concentrated into such a promise as this before us—"To him that overcometh I will give to sit with Me on My throne."

It has been well observed, that the heart has its arguments as well as the understanding; and, of revealed truth, it is especially true, that while much of it eludes the grasp of the understanding, it is beautifully accommodated to the apprehensions of the heart. You, my brethren, will find no difficulty in applying this remark to the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, we have followed no cunningly devised fable, when we made it known unto you. This is no private interpretation of that prophecy which came not by the will

of man, but which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter i. 16—21).

Although fully aware of the large demand made upon your patience, and of the extent to which I have already trespassed upon your time and attention, I cannot descend from this place without some attempt at practical improvement, and more solemn enforcement of what has gone before. You have come here, not to be amused, but to be instructed; not to adjudicate upon rival systems of interpretation, but to be built up in your most holy faith; not to criticize the preacher, but to be sanctified with the truth; and, so coming, you shall not be sent empty away, since "the meek he will guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way."

Whether we take the sketch of the Apocalyptic Churches, presented to us in these chapters, as merely a representation of things, as they were in the days of St. John, or, as intended, also, to lay before us the Church in its prophetic aspect, all along to the period of the reward promised, to "Him that overcometh," it is to us equally fraught with solemn and instructive warning. The state of the prophetic world, the Empire of ancient Rome, is at this moment such, that no counterpart can be found for it in anything that has already taken place.

Signs of portentous magnitude are multiplying and thickening as the end approaches, "and coming events cast their shadows before." The Church, in the midst of the world, cannot be unobservant, and, at such a crisis, ought not to be unmindful of all those things that shall come to pass, and of which the present throbbing may be but the first symptoms, like the large drops that presage the steady advance of the coming tempest. At such a time there is not one who professes to care for his Saviour, and his soul, and to have laid hold of the hope set before him, that ought not to examine himself, whether some features of Laodicean character may not be shewing themselves in him. Lukewarm indifference, and self-sufficient pride, are the evils for which the name of "Laodicea" has long been a synonyme, and upon which the doom has been pronounced, to be rejected with disdain. Are we sure that no counterpart to these may be amongst ourselves? Was there ever a period when infidelity, popery, rationalism, liberalism, formalism, in all their phases and varieties, and with their whole train of sad consequences, were so rife amongst us? The master stroke of worldly policy seems to be, not to purify these through the power of God's blessed Word, but so to eliminate every disturbing element that the discordant mass may be fused into a seeming co-

herence, the very triumph of which would be such a peace, as we can well imagine may have existed in Laodicea, the acmè of self-complacency, that said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," whereas, in the eye of God it is pronounced to have been "miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." In the midst of such a state there were also many that He loved ; neither had they escaped the universal taint, but He rebuked and chastened them. Better to be "chastened of the Lord, than to be condemned with the world" (1 Cor. xi. 32). "Be zealous," said He to them, intimating that their love had waxed cold, that they were unfruitful, "and repent," because they had not turned from their evil ways. But, even for such, there is now, as then, an invitation tender and urgent. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if any man hear My voice and open the door," the closest intimacy, and the sweetest intercourse is open to him. To crown all, moreover, the assured hope is superadded, "To him that overcometh will I give to sit with Me on My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father on His throne. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

Beloved, men and brethren, what shall we do? I will regard this congregation as consisting only

of two classes. Of those, namely, who cannot go with us altogether, or see with us, eye to eye, as we read the page of prophetic promise and blessed hope; and of those, also, who are agreed upon what are generally understood as the doctrines of the premillennial advent of our coming King, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. A concluding word to each and I have done. First, then, I would observe earnestly, and affectionately, to the former, that the matter at issue is of deeper moment than to be passed over lightly. Oh, yes, search the Scriptures daily, like the Bereans, whether those things are so. Compare Daniel with John, and Paul with Moses, and David with Peter, and all and each of them, including yourselves, with Jesus Christ, that your faith may stand not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." But, though you may not be able to accompany us to our happy conclusions on this high theme, there are many points and principles in common with us. Jesus Christ is with you, "all in all." We are agreed in what He hath done for us. He loved us, and gave Himself for us; He hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. We are agreed as to what He requires of us to do for Him. To shew forth His praise, to let our light shine before men, to adorn His doctrine in all things, bringing forth much fruit, proving ourselves His disciples.

We are agreed as to what He is doing now for us. That as he *hath appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so also he *doth now appear* in the presence of God for us, and that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through Him. And, lastly, we are agreed upon the struggles and temptations the believer has to endure and surmount, before he can say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Oh, is there not in this a field for the culture of those fruits of righteousness, that are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God? Our strength and sufficiency is of Him only. Oh, then, cleave unto Him, look unto Him, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. Hope unto the end, even though that hope cannot be so bright and vivid as if it included also, that "unto them that look for Him *shall He appear* the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 26, 24, 28), and had been caught from the promise of His coming, and of sitting down with Him on His throne, after you had overcome.

This leads me, in the last place, to offer a brief word of exhortation to those also who include in the hope set before them the power and coming of their Lord and Saviour, and the expectation, from His promise to them that overcome, that they shall sit down with Him on His throne. Each word

already addressed to those of our dear brethren whom I have supposed not able to see these things as we see them, applies with undiminished force to us—nay, rather, is every fundamental truth, which we hold in common, deepened in its intensity of application to ourselves, from the light and power thrown back upon it, by those further things that “are most surely believed among us.” And, if an obligation rests upon all who profess and call themselves Christians, beyond what lies on those who have not yet heard the joyful sound, surely, in proportion as this knowledge is increased, as we are permitted to enter more deeply into its mysteries and its hopes, its promises and its glory, is the obligation enhanced with us to be “fruitful in every good work,” “in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.” Every argument and motive made use of to urge the Christian to take heed to himself, for the sake of “those that are without,” acquires a more intense force in its application to ourselves, with reference to many brethren whom we love and respect as such. By our fruits we must be known. It must be seen, not only, that these comforting truths that we cherish are not merely visionary and speculative, but that they are in us continually the source and companions of growing grace and godliness. We must, by our

life and conversation, vindicate these precious truths, not simply from imputation of carnality, such as was charged upon the early Church, for the way in which it held them, and the expectations that it built upon them, and which, whether justly or otherwise, had much to do with the prejudice that arose against them, and the forgetfulness into which they were suffered to fall ; but we must shew that "Christ within us formed the hope of glory," is the abettor of every virtue, the promoter of everything "lovely and of good report."

Our lot is cast in times of no ordinary peril and moment. This is an exacting age. More is required of every man, in every walk of life, than was expected from his predecessor in more easy-going days. And there is no reason why the Christian should form the solitary exception to this law of universal exaction. We must be up and doing, my brethren. The enemies are active, and the time is short. The storms may rage, and the surges may swell, but "the night is far spent, the day is at hand,"—relief is near. "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, but to you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing on His wings." Oh, let us look more closely to Jesus only, and this the rather as the time approaches. Safety, glory, and immortality are to be had in Him alone. He that

cometh will come and will not tarry. His enemies shall be made His footstool. The mystery of God shall be finished. The great voices in heaven shall proclaim, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever." And we—O rapturous thought!—our warfare accomplished, our victory won, shall sit down with Him on His throne, and shall be ever with the Lord. (Rev. x. 7; xi. 15.)

Oh, Lord, hasten it in Thy time. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen.

LECTURE XII.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE COMING ONE AND RESPONSE OF THE DISCIPLE.

BY THE

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REVELATION XXII. 20.

“He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

THE difficulty of closing this course of Lectures, arises simply from a desire to avoid a repetition of the different matters that have already been brought under your notice. We have had, for instance, the importance of this book itself. We have been told of the special blessing which is attached to the study of the Apocalypse. We

have been carried back, as in the last Lecture, to things past; we have joined in meditating on things as they are; and we have been led to consider things as they will be. We have heard of the nature of the coming—the certainty of the coming, and from the peculiar aspect of the times we have been reminded of the probable nearness of the coming.

Under these circumstances, in treating the subject which falls to my lot to dwell upon to night—"THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE COMING ONE AND THE RESPONSE OF THE DISCIPLE," I am compelled to dwell but very briefly on the first part of my subject, and to confine myself to the speaking at greater length on the second division.

You will have perceived from the summary which I have thus given, that in fact the announcement has already been preached upon, and yet, at the same time, it would not be right, inasmuch as the text so clearly alludes to the announcement of a coming One, that I should altogether pass it over in silence.

I would remark then, that Christ clearly speaks of a speedy coming. He proclaims that He is "coming quickly."

In what sense then, are we to understand that statement—"surely I come quickly?" There has been delay—we cannot deny it; this delay is an

apparent contradiction to the announcement in the text—we cannot deny it; still “it is not slackness as some men count slackness;” but we know that the delay is intentional. It is not an unforeseen delay. It was foreknown. We know that the vision is yet for an appointed time, that it will surely come, that it will not tarry. I do not like, then, to suppose, as some persons have supposed, that those words of Scripture which refer to the nearness of the coming of the Lord, were written in two different senses; that is, that they were intended to be understood in one sense by those who first heard them, and in a different sense by those who now hear them. That cannot be a proper method of interpreting the Word of God. If once we allow that rule, we may make the Scriptures mean anything or nothing, just as we please. And, certainly, we cannot sanction the idea that there could be any prevarication in the statement.

We know indeed, that Enoch prophesied that the Lord would come with all His saints; and that he, therefore, spake of the second coming even at that period so long preceding the first advent. There is, however, a difference between the manner in which the Old Testament writers speak of that coming, and the manner in which the writers of the New Testament allude to it. It seems to me that the simple explanation is, that the intervening

dispensation had passed away, and that the last dispensation previous to the coming was now entered upon; and that the fact of our being in the last dispensation, is one sense in which we are to understand that the Lord is "coming quickly."

Again, if we look to the statement of time referred to in this, and in similar passages, and compare that statement of time with eternity itself, we know that the period must be short. But, at any rate, whether either of these views be the right interpretation or not, there is one thing which is perfectly clear, that such statements as these—"surely I come quickly"—"the Lord is at hand," directly refute that which is commonly spoken of as the post-millennial theory: I mean, that we are to expect a marked period of a thousand years to intervene before the coming of the Lord.

It is important for us, that we should always keep this fact before us—that the post-millennial theory is decidedly anti-scriptural. For I cannot conceive that such a motive as the nearness of the Lord could be so constantly brought forward in the Word of God as we saw in the last Lecture; that it is impossible, I say, to consider, that this should be a great and leading motive to holiness set before us in the Scripture, if we might paraphrase the passage, and say, "the Lord is at hand;" but a thousand years are to intervene

before the Saviour comes. It must then cease to be a strong motive, or even a motive at all. According to that theory, eternal life or eternal death must have commenced before the time of the Saviour's advent. Doubtless, whatever be the correct interpretation of the passage before us, it is intended to keep alive watchfulness in all the people of God, and to give comfort to all His sorrowing saints. It is thus that St. Paul writes in the 13th Romans, where he says, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

This announcement was not made simply for us, or for the apostle, but to remind all that there is a duty connected with this announcement which should never be overlooked by Christians. If the subject were of so great importance that it is frequently and emphatically proclaimed in the sacred volume, it must also be of importance that the sacred announcement should be proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of the world; and that, therefore, it is your duty and mine, never to omit an opportunity of making known this great doctrine of the Bible.

To the discharge of this duty I am quite aware many objections are raised. We are told by some that there are so many differences of opinion

on the subject of unfulfilled prophecy, that it is very imprudent for us to enter upon it, and that it would be far better to leave a subject on which so many wise and good men differ, till the fulfilment is proclaimed. But, my brethren, would not that argument have held equally good if applied to the Old Testament prophecies which have been already fulfilled in the first coming of the Lord? If the argument is to be admitted for a moment, that differences of opinion are to be barriers to all further discussion, I would venture to ask what topic there is on which there are not differences of opinion? If I take that, which, I suppose all who are here present, and have any right to call themselves Christians would say they were agreed upon—I mean the doctrine of justification by faith—I ask whether that doctrine should not be preached in the ears of the unconverted, because there are persons who hold heterodox views on that all-important subject. I ask whether differences of opinion are to be allowed thus to put to silence the revealed Word of God?

I am told, however, again, the doctrine of the second advent is not revealed; but that this subject is one of the secret things which God has kept to Himself. Surely there is a great difference between a thing being misunderstood by man and being a secret thing of God. *The names of*

the saved are amongst the secret things known to the Lord, *but the doctrine of personal election* is amongst the things revealed, which are for us and our children. The day and hour of the advent are amongst the secret things, but the certainty of the advent is revealed again and again, and is for us and our children. It is to beg the whole question to say that the doctrine of Christ's advent is not stated in His word. I am prepared to maintain that the coming of the Lord, not only is stated, not only is revealed, but that it is the great motive which is held out to us for present watchfulness, for continued perseverance, and for looking forward to the glorious hope of being with the Lord Himself for ever.

Again, I am told that there have been so many mistakes made, and that there has been such unwise dogmatism on the whole subject of the coming of the Lord, that it would be far better that the subject should now be buried in oblivion. So that, because there has been a want of wisdom in some persons, there can be no wisdom in any person. Because some have spoken rashly, nobody can speak temperately. But, even were that true, I again ask, where is the liberty that is given to you or me, to cut out one single topic from the Word of God; I appeal to you whether the whole Bible is not given to us for "instruction," and whether it is

not "profitable" for us, to make us thoroughly "furnished unto all good works." If God has seen it right to give us a whole Bible, then again I say, where is the right on our side to cut out a single doctrine, to cut out a single chapter, to cut out a single verse, to cut out a single word? Where do we find the permission to say that we will not go forth to the whole world and proclaim what the Lord Jesus Himself has proclaimed—"Surely I come quickly."

Again, I am told that it is no use our publishing the nearness of the advent, for the subject is not practical. That was so fully handled on the last occasion that I shall not occupy your time in shewing you that there is not a single practical duty which is enjoined in the word of God, which is not more or less directly connected with the doctrine of the nearness of the second advent.

Others object that, whether it be true or not, the coming of Christ is so like death to all intents and purposes, that it is matter of indifference whether we believe it or not. But, it can be no matter of indifference, if God did not make it indifferent. If God has placed this subject before us in His own Book, clearly and distinctly, and has treated it as separate from death, it can be no matter of indifference whether we treat the Word of God as God intended, or whether we suppose

the motives we insist upon are as strong as those which God has been pleased to reveal. I am perfectly convinced that there are numbers of persons who shrink from making this announcement, who shrink from the avowal that they believe what the Word of God proclaims, namely, that Jesus Christ will come again personally ; that He will be upon earth ; that He will sit upon the throne of His father David ; that the Jews will be restored to their own land, given by covenant to Abraham, and his seed for ever ; that Jesus will be recognized as King of the Jews, "and all the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ." I say, there are numbers who shrink from this statement, simply from fear of the reproach which it may bring on themselves. That it does bring reproach on them, I do not deny. But I am sure that it is a doctrine less offensive now than it was some twenty years ago, and, if I am not very much mistaken, I may attribute the improvement in some measure to the various courses of Lectures which have been delivered from this place.

There are now numerous courses of Prophetical Lectures delivered, not only in the metropolis, but in other parts of the country, and the minds of many influential men have readily received this truth. Still, amongst those who are

thoroughly immersed in the pleasures of the world, there is still to be heard the language of the scoffer, exclaiming—"Where is the promise of His coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Brethren, as Christians we must not be afraid of bringing reproach upon ourselves for simply endeavouring to make known what the word of God reveals; we ought never to be ashamed of confessing that we do believe what that word proclaims in its plain, and strictly literal sense.

Let me further add, in connection with this part of the subject, that I know no means by which you can proclaim this truth more forcibly amongst your coteremporaries and equals in the world, than by your own life and conversation. It is easy for us to talk of the theory of the Lord's coming; but it is another thing, and a much more difficult thing, to live as we would wish to live, if we were certain that the Lord were immediately at hand. And that which I believe does a great deal of mischief is, that there are persons who hold the doctrine of the nearness of the advent of the Lord, while they shew by their practice that they think the Lord will delay His coming, and that for a very long period. The Apostle Peter, foreseeing the great changes which would take place when the

Lord should come in His glorious majesty, exclaimed, "Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter iii. 11.)

I shall pass on now from this part of the subject, to look rather more minutely at the response which was given by the beloved disciple. As soon as he heard that "He who testifieth these things" which the Book contains, exclaimed, "Surely I come quickly," he was ready at once with the answer, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

In order to enter into the spirit of this reply, I propose to consider first of all, **THE FEELINGS** which we may suppose to exist in every Christian person longing for the return of Christ.

I would remark then, first, the strongest feeling which would be in his heart is that of gratitude, He knows what the Lord Jesus has done for his soul, and his heart burns within him with grateful desire to see his great Benefactor. The believer, you will recollect, never separates the blessings of the second advent from the circumstances of the first. That is, while he is meditating on the joys which shall be his, at the second coming of the Lord, he recollects that they are only vouchsafed in consequence of the blessings introduced into

the world, and secured by the sufferings of the Saviour at His first coming.

But it is not only a feeling of gratitude to the Redeemer Himself; there will also be love for his fellow-men. In death, even supposing it to be to us according to that common and generally misapplied phrase—"a happy release"—to whom does that happiness extend? It extends to him who is called hence that he may be with Christ. But then, can death be said to be a great happiness to the surviving parent who has his child taken away? Is it a great happiness to the affectionate husband who has seen the desire of his eyes taken away with a stroke? Can it be said to be a great happiness that one near and dear to us should be called hence to be no more seen in this life? If it be a source of happiness to the survivors, then I can only say, that human nature has become more free from selfishness than I ever yet discovered it to be, or than I can ever hope to experience in my own person.

But when I look at the circumstances of the second advent, I see then, that the doctrine of Christ's coming involves the happiness not of one, but of all believers in Christ. I see that it is not only "a happy release" to the one who has been delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world,

but I see that there is to be a reunion of all who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." I see that those who have loved one another on earth will again meet, that they will recognize each other, and be for ever with the Lord. Therefore, that large-hearted love which ought to exist in every Christian's heart, makes him desire earnestly the return of his absent Lord.

Secondly, we should consider the state of the Christian prepared for the advent. In order that you may know whether you may use the words in the text, and say for yourselves, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," it is right that you should bear in mind for whom that coming is a blessing. I should say then, that no man can, or ought to desire the Lord's return, who is not himself new-born—born of God—who is not a new creature in Christ Jesus. If our affections are only the natural affections with which we were born, then they are corrupt, and they are altogether unsuited to the atmosphere of heaven. But if we are "new-born," then there are new affections; "old things have passed away, and all things have become new." The Holy Spirit has taken the things of Christ; the Holy Spirit has shewn those things unto us; then is it that we have such longings for the return of the Redeemer. Then it is, that we

know that He is "chiefest amongst ten thousand, and altogether lovely."

Brethren, you ought to apply this matter directly to your own souls. Be assured of this, whatever men may tell you as to your being unable to say whether you are children of God or not, the Scripture tells you that you may clearly distinguish between those who are of God, and those who are of the world. It was not merely the word of inspiration, but it was the personal experience of the Christian, when St. John said, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." He knew that to be his own state. Why should he not? And if he knew his state, why should not we know our state?

Only look at the metaphors which represent man in an unconverted state. We find him described as "blind;" and when converted we find he is represented as "seeing." What is there then, to prevent us, who are born spiritually blind, from taking up the language of him who was born physically blind (see John ix.), and saying, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see?" Brethren, can *you* "see?" I would ask you to give an answer to that question in your own hearts—can you "see?" Do you know that you once were blind as to spiritual things?—and can you now

“see” that you have an interest in Christ; that you are born of God; that now it is no mere formal way in which you speak, but that with practical experience in your heart you can say you are “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

Again; before you can rightly say, “Come, Lord Jesus,” you must be one of those who are justified. It is only those who are justified freely by grace that are free from all fear of condemnation. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;” but there is condemnation to all who are not justified, and who are not therefore “in Christ Jesus,”—who are not united to Him by faith,—who have not been taught to look to Him as their only hope of salvation. Accordingly, St. John gave this exhortation, “Now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”

You perceive, therefore, that those who are justified, have confidence, and that the apostle would urge us to have that confidence, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John v. 13). Why should we not say as St. Paul said, “We know that if

our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked." There are many persons who refuse to have this confidence; who refuse to look simply at Christ as the ground of their salvation; and because they refuse thus simply to look *at* Christ, they of course are in an unfit state for looking *for* Christ.

The Scriptures also lead us to say that all who are desirous of seeing the Lord Jesus Christ have their conversation in heaven;" that is, they are "citizens of heaven;" from whence also they look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are living as in the possession of their various privileges; they have a foretaste of heaven; they have an earnest given, and they are looking for the full enjoyment hereafter. And this it is that leads men in the expectation of that full enjoyment, to live in constant watchfulness. They live in watchfulness of the signs of the times, to which reference is made in Matt. xxiv. We are told, immediately after the tribulation of those days, that the sun shall be darkened, and that the moon shall not give her light, and the stars

shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Then after shewing what the result of this will be, our blessed Lord gave this solemn warning, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

But more especially do such persons live in a state of watchfulness against self-deception. This is a point which I should like to press upon your attention, because there are so many things which look like true graces which are only counterfeit. I would press you to examine yourselves as to whether you are watchful against self-deception. I will bring forward one or two scriptural characters to illustrate what I mean. Take, for instance, the state of Jehu's heart, and his zeal for the Lord. There was much to shew that he was in earnest for God, but we know the end of the matter. It is possible that some of you also may have a zeal for God, and yet that you may not have "the root of the matter" in you. There may be a knowledge of what is error, and an earnest desire to refute it, without there being a love of the truth as it is in Jesus. Depend upon it negative religion will never stand the searching eye of God.

Then take the case of Herod, who heard John

gladly. When we look at the different congregations or assemblies in the churches where the Gospel is faithfully preached, we are prepared to think the very best of the people, and to hope that they do more than hear the Gospel gladly. But how often do we find that when the congregation disperses the sermon is dispersed too. We find that they from whom we hoped most, prove that when the moment of temptation comes they cannot resist it. They are like Demas, of whom it is said, that he "loved this present world," and forsook those with whom he had previously worked.

Then, thirdly, those who desire the Lord's return are persons who are living in active work for God. In the 13th chapter of Romans, to which I have alluded already, we are told, "That now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent ; day is at hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." Active duties ought to be our's. There is, in these days, too much of what I can only describe as drawing-room religion. I mean by that expression a great readiness to talk much in person, and to do our work by proxy. That is a very unhealthy state of religion, and I confess I have great misgivings about the state of that person's soul who can talk

exceedingly well, but is never actively engaged in doing the work of the Lord.

It is not enough for persons to give their guinea to a charity. It is not enough for a rich person to say to one, go here, and to another, go there, and do this or that for the good of others. The question is, what trouble do you yourselves take for the Lord's sake? I grant that you are not called upon to give all the money you possess for such works: it is not intended that the rich should change places with the poor: but I would venture to ask where is your self-denial? Self-denial does not consist in giving money only: it is a question of feeling. And I appeal to you whether it may not be said of some of you that you have a great name in the world for being religious, but that you, nevertheless, are not to be found denying themselves, and actively working for the Lord's sake and for the Lord's cause?

I would even further enquire, whether a man can know the Scriptures, or whether a man can believe the Scriptures, without longing for Christ's return? There ought to be no hesitation on our part, as to whether we are living in a state which fits us for longing for that return or not. I say there ought to be no hesitation amongst us whatever, for though we may not

have said in the words of the text, "Come, Lord Jesus," yet every one of us in our daily prayer does say, "Thy kingdom come;" and where is the difference? We pray in the Lord's Prayer, that the Lord's "kingdom" may "come," that His "will may be done on earth even as it is in heaven," and we know it will not be done on earth as it is heaven till the Lord comes; and in fact, we are entreating the Lord Jesus to come quickly on the very principle that we may see holiness pervade the world. How any man can use that prayer who is living willingly and knowingly a life of unholiness—how any man can use that prayer, and yet at the same time not be exerting himself in order that he may in his own person do the will of God on earth even as it is in heaven, I do not understand.

Brethren, I am sure your own consciences tell you that there is no use in our talking of believing in the coming of the Lord—there is no use in our saying that we hope that at the coming we ourselves shall be partakers of His joys, if our own hearts are not changed by the power of divine grace. It is of no use our speaking thus if we are not amongst those who are justified freely by grace. It is no use if our conversation is not really in heaven. It is no use our talking

of these glorious times if we are not looking to the state of our own hearts, to know whether we are self-deceived or not.

Brethren, the apostle John tells us plainly, that if we are looking for the return of the Lord, a great work is now going on within our own breasts. He says in the third chapter of his first epistle, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He (that is, Christ) is pure." I confess, as I meditated upon this portion of the word, for the purpose of addressing you to-night, that my own mind was deeply impressed with the awful contemplation of any man recognizing Christ at the last day with an unconverted heart. The subject speaks doubly strong to a minister: it speaks doubly strong, I say, to every minister who has been preaching Christ, and yet has not experimentally known Christ. But it speaks also to every man. It speaks to all who have been accustomed to attend these courses of sermons year after year, to all who have been warned of the speedy, the unexpected, and yet the certain return of our Lord Jesus Christ to judge the world. If you, notwithstanding all these warnings, are unconverted at heart, and so are unprepared to meet Him, what will be your doom at Christ's appearing! But, on the other hand, if you are Christ's,

what blessings are yours ! Is it power that a man can possibly desire ? Shall he not be exalted to God's right hand ? Is position that which he can desire ? Shall he not sit down with the Saviour on His throne even as He is now sitting with the Father on His throne ? Is it honour to which he can aspire ? Why, we are told that "all things are ours, for we are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

But, my brethren, I must not suffer myself to dwell on this part of the subject any longer : I would rather wind up this course, leaving you, if it may please God, with a solemn impression on your minds, and I pray that God's Holy Spirit may be amongst us, and that He may carry the word into your consciences. Let me ask you, then, can you use this prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus?" God knows your answer, and God knows your thoughts : He knows every secret of your hearts. Can you then say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus?" I would ask, is your life consistent with this prayer ? I would appeal to the rich amongst you, and I would ask them, Can you say that you have adopted the admonition of the apostle, who has said, "Let your moderation be known unto all men ; the Lord is at hand." Remember that I am not interfering with your position. I am not finding fault with your wealth :

I am not saying that it is not your part, or your duty, at times to be the great encouragers of art and science in the country. All that may be true, but unconverted men can and will do all that. I am asking you whether you are doing what the children of God alone will do ; whether you can say solemnly as before God, that you know your position as stewards of the Lord, and that as a steward you are seeking to be found faithful? In that day when the nobleman shall return, and when he shall summon his servants before him, when each must give an account of every talent entrusted to his care, what will be your reply? If I know anything of the human heart ; if I know anything of your feelings ; if I may test them in any way by my own, I am sure that this is a very solemn matter for your reflection, and I doubt not that there is great cause for the personal humiliation of all of us before God.

Let me in the next place remind you, that this subject has been set forth by the apostle James as one of the strongest grounds of encouragement to the poor man. The Bible never overlooks the fact that the poor are to exist always in the world. The Bible never leads us to expect any equality of position, any equality of wealth, any equality of worldly circumstances ; but the Lord foresee-

ing that there would not be any equality, and foreseeing that there would be poor who would suffer severely, and foreseeing that it was impossible for those poor people not to compare their state with that of others more prosperous than themselves in the world, has in His great mercy, by the mouth of His apostle, brought forward this doctrine as a special ground of encouragement and patience. He says, "Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord." "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

To mourners also this subject ought to speak words of great consolation. Bear with me, brethren, if I touch upon a tender chord. Are there any here in sorrow for friends that are gone? Look at the whole subject, not only as you may gather it from this particular verse, but look at the spirit in which the apostle wrote his letter to the Thessalonians, and you will see that he specially dwells on the reunion of those who are in Christ Jesus: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe

that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thes. iv. 13—17) : and then observe the apostle closes the subject by bidding the members of the Church comfort one another with these words.

But there is another class to whom I would fain say a word : I mean the wavering. You have heard, that not only did the apostle readily say, "Come, Lord Jesus," but that the Lord Himself said, "Surely I come quickly." The apostles again and again affirm the truth that the "Lord is at hand." The times in which we are living are times of most solemn import. Brethren, can you have read the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, and can you have read the newspapers, and not see the truth of what I am saying? Can you have heard of the wars, the famines, the earthquakes which have taken place ; the manner

in which the Gospel is being preached throughout the world; the favour which has of late years been shewn to the Jews? Can you put all these circumstances together, and then for a moment doubt that "our salvation is nearer than when we believed?" Can you hesitate to believe that this text is to be taken now in its plainest and most literal sense, "Surely I come quickly?" And yet, I ask, whether there is not still delay in inquiring after the truth which concerns your eternal salvation?

If there be any who have come into this Church by accident, as we say, to hear the warning which is now given, I would ask them if they are not ready with excuses for delay, and with reasons why *they* at least may continue for a short season longer indifferent to their souls? Would that you might be led to ask to-night, what our blessed Saviour is now doing? I will tell you. He is living to make intercession for you and for me, and for all sinners. But there is a limit to that time of intercession; for, as He Himself says, He "comes quickly," so we know He will come a second time "without sin unto salvation."

It is altogether beyond man's power to say whether that coming will be in a very short period or not, whether you will be called hence

to go before the Lord, or whether the Lord Himself will come upon the earth. We are left in total uncertainty as to the time of the appearing. We are left in that uncertainty that we all may be brought to true repentance, and that we may yet have time to hear a full offer of salvation made—that we may still have the warning given, “Prepare to meet thy God.” But if we are still found hesitating and doubting, we are ruining our own souls. Brethren, while you are hesitating, the door of heaven may be closing. While you are doubting, the sentence may be passing, “Cut it down—cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?”

But, till we hear that sentence with our own ears, there is hope; and what I wish you to do this very night is to come to the solemn determination, that having heard the warning, you will flee from the wrath to come—that you will not tarry longer—that you will not attempt nicely to balance matters between heaven and the world, between the devil and God, but that you will make up your minds at once to come forth and shew yourselves boldly on the Lord’s side, so that it may be known by your whole life and conversation that you believe your Bible, that you believe the Saviour is at hand, and that you are determined to manifest that belief by turning away

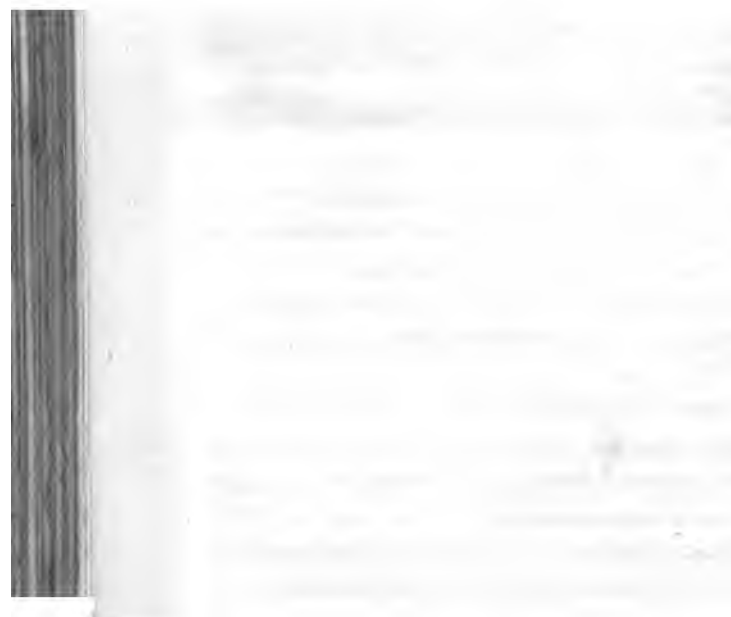
from all "works of darkness, and to put on you the armour of light." Is there one amongst you who is going to make that decision? Is there one who will say, "I will serve my God," or are you still doubting?

Brethren, it is the seeking to have a little more of the world that has given many a man a great deal too much of hell. What is required of all here present is a clear, earnest decision for God. There must be no more of this half and half religion: we are of God, or we are of the devil. And, my brethren, if you are believers indeed, as I am sure many amongst you are, you will gladly re-echo the text, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Still I cannot deny that it is a most awful subject for us to contemplate. There is something in those two little words, "for ever," which seems to search into the very inmost parts of our souls. When Christ comes, there will be separation for ever; separation from sin for ever; separation to holiness for ever; separation from those who have been unconverted for ever; separation, to be with the Lord's people for ever. To which class will you belong in that day? May the Lord grant that by the workings of the Holy Spirit within us, we may choose that good part which shall never be taken from us, and that

there may not be one amongst us who shall not be acknowledged by Christ in that "great day," and be summoned by the Lord of all to sit down with Him on His throne even as He is now sitting with His Father upon His throne. Then may we with heart and soul exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus ; come quickly. Amen."

THE END.





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